

Examination Access and Mitigation Committee

Annual Report, 2020-21

This is the third annual report of the Examination Access and Mitigation Committee for presentation to the Examination and Assessment Committee and other interested bodies.

This report also includes data on Adjusted Modes of Assessment and has been drafted by the Committee's administrative support team using data held within the University's student information system (CamSIS), and data held locally in the Student Registry.

Unless displayed, percentages have been rounded.

Examination Access and Mitigation Committee

March 2022

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A: Introduction

REMIT OF THE COMMITTEE

The Examination Access and Mitigation Committee (EAMC) reports to the Examination and Assessment Committee, which in turn reports to the General Board's Education Committee.

The Committee (or its Officers under delegated authority) deal with applications for:

- Adjusted Modes of Assessments (prior to examination)
- Examination Access arrangements (prior to examinations)
- Examination allowances (post examinations)
- Dissertation and Coursework extensions
- Disregarding terms, intermission and resuming study
- Consideration of non-standard combinations of papers
- Remission of University Composition Fees;
- Non-member leave to attend lectures;

The bulk of business concerns the implementation of the Ordinances governing Allowances to Candidates for Examinations (Statutes and Ordinances, 2020 edition, p. 243). Whilst much of its work is concerned with candidates for Honours Examinations, the Committee also has responsibility for considering allowances to candidates for other qualifications (e.g. the LLM and the MBA) which fall outside the remit of the Postgraduate Committee.

In addition, subsequent to the dissolution of the Board of Graduate Studies on 1 October 2020, matters relating to applications for Examination Allowances and Adjusted Modes of Assessments for certain Postgraduate courses which includes Master of Philosophy (MPhil) by Advanced Study, Master of Education (MEd), Master of Research (MRes), Master of Studies (MSt), Certificate of Postgraduate Study (CPGS) and Advanced and Postgraduate Diplomas have been transferred to the EAMC.

AIMS OF THE 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.

Guidance notes to support students and staff submitting applications are reviewed and published annually.

The EAMC was required to respond to the continued impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic, which included implementing safeguards again to ensure that student cases could still be considered if the Medical Advisers were not available, and adjusting its guidance notes to adapt to the changes in assessment in the Easter Term 2021. Due to the further changes to assessment, from a mix of formative / summative and online provision in the Easter Term 2020 to a hybrid model of summative in-person and online provision in the Easter Term 2021, the data for 2020-21 is non-standard again. This is also because of the Assessment Mitigation 2020-21. This package of assessment mitigation measures included:

1. **Cohort equity** - Examiners in each subject ensured that the distribution of classes for 2020-21 was no less favourable than the average class distribution for the last three years before the pandemic (2016/2017, 2017/2018, 2018/2019).
2. **Automatic progression to subsequent year of study for first and second year Tripos students** - All first and second year undergraduate students who took the full assessment automatically progressed to their next year of study, irrespective of whether they obtained a pass.
3. **Impact statement** - If the lockdown had been detrimental to a student's research, they may have submitted a statement alongside a dissertation, project or coursework which would have been taken into account by examiners.
4. **Coursework extensions** - consideration of individual applications for extensions for up to 14 days was devolved to Faculties and Departments, who also considered cohort extensions. Applications for longer than 14 days remained under the remit of the Committee.
5. **Changes to examination or coursework requirements** - Faculties and Departments considered, in consultation with student representatives, whether particular changes to examination or coursework requirements should be made.
6. **Individual mitigation measures** - Existing mitigation measures were available to individual students who experienced very significant disadvantage in their preparation for and participation in exams. This included Exam warnings, Exam allowances and the Examination Review and Representations to Examiners procedures. Further guidance was available at <https://www.cambridgestudents.cam.ac.uk/your-course/examinations/mitigation>.

B: Summary of Activity 2020-2021

EXAMINATION NUMBERS

- The University scheduled 2,140 examinations in 2020-21, compared to 2,310 in 2018-19¹, a reduction of 7% which suggests that most departments have maintained a form of examination rather than move to coursework or other modes of assessment.
- There were 62,137 candidatures for summative assessment, compared to 66,451 in 2018-19, a reduction of 6%. It is expected this reduction is linked to those subjects who reverted to coursework, such as the MMLL and Architecture Triposes.
- The majority (82%) of examinations were held online using either Moodle or external software, ProctorExam. The remaining 18% were in person examinations.

EXAMINATION ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS (EAA)

- 1,421 candidates were approved for examination access arrangements, although some would not have needed them due to the changes in modes of assessment.
- 74 applications were received, and 52 applications were approved for an Adjusted Mode of Assessment.

EXAMINATION ALLOWANCES

- 1,271 applications received in 2020-21
- 1,087 applications approved: 742 under delegated authority, 335 by Committee, 10 by circulation.
- 155 applications declined: 141 by Committee, 12 under delegated authority and 2 by circulation.
- 29 applications submitted were subsequently withdrawn due to reasons of the student seeking an alternative allowance or withdrawing from their course.
- 401 applications considered for students to disregard terms.
- 304 applications to resume study following a period of intermission.
- 175 requests for an extension to a dissertation or coursework.
- 153 requests for 'Reconsideration of an Original Result' following receipt of examination results.
- 80% of applications were for medical reasons.
- 73% of cases considered for medical reasons were for reasons of Mental Health.

¹ 2018-19 is the last year that all students undertook summative assessment

C: Examination Access Arrangements

EXAMINATION ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS (EAA)

Examination Access Arrangements are considered under the Code of Practice: Reasonable adjustments for Disabled Students.

Colleges submit applications for standard examination arrangements on behalf of students using the student information system, CamSIS. There are published guidelines and well-established processes for managing and approving these applications.

Examples of applications for EAA may include allowing a student:

- Extra time (written)
- Rest breaks
- Use of a PC
- Use of an amanuensis / reader

Decisions on applications are made by delegated authority using the agreed framework. Cases for exceptional EAA are referred to the Secretary, and in specific cases, to the Committee. Table 1 below shows the number of applications for EAA over a 5-year period.

TABLE 1	2020-21	2019-20	2018-19	2017-18	2016-17
Number of students receiving EAA	1,421	1,467	1,660	1,615	1,498

Although the data suggests a decrease in the number of EAA applications that were submitted and approved in 2020-21 compared to 2019-20, there was an increase. The reasons why the data does not reflect this are listed below:

- The data reported for 2019-20 was not representative as the move to online assessments in the Easter Term 2020 negated the need for many students to need specific examination arrangements as reasonable adjustments.
- Despite being told to submit EAA applications in 2020-21, including where the format negated the need for EAA, it's likely applications were not submitted.
- The increase in the number of examination allowances requested in 2020-21 (post exams) suggests that students needed EAA, but that these were not applied for before the assessment.

Colleges use CamSIS to make applications for students to receive EAA, which since 2018-19, allows Colleges to record more than one reason for applications.

The data has shown us that:	2020-21	2019-20	2018-19
Maximum number of disabilities listed for one student	7	4	4
Number of candidates who have more than one disability listed	340	241	295
Number of candidates who have more than two disabilities listed	79	51	55

Table 2 – Exam Access Arrangements awarded by reason, year and term

Reason	2020-21			2019-20			2018-19			2017-18			2016-17		
	MT	LT	ET	MT	LT	ET	MT	LT	ET	MT	LT	ET	MT	LT	ET
Accident	1	2	19		2	2	1	3	37	1	4	30		1	21
Anxiety	7	23	266	7	19	252		9	271	3	7	159	2	4	176
Asperger’s Syndrome / Autism	2	9	104	1	4	101	2	7	90	1	2	50		2	55
Attention Deficit Disorder	6	23	172	9	6	105	1	9	93	3	6	47	1		27
Back / joint pain								5	96						
Blind/Visual Impairment	1	4	33	2	4	27		1	22	1	1	22	1	3	21
Cough/Cold			1						5		1				
Coronavirus		1	8												
Isolating (due to coronavirus)			33												
Deaf/Hearing Impairment	3	2	19		2	23		1	18		1	11		1	3
Epileptic									5			5			7
Headache/Migraine				1		19			12			20			18
IBS/Colitis	2	8	44	5	5	45		3	46		1	26	1	1	26
Long-Term Illness									6	2	4	71	2	2	54
ME/Chronic Fatigue		3	22			17			20			18			22
MH issues / Depression / Eating disorder		15	221	9	12	247	5	13	265	2	5	123	1	2	98
OCD	2	5	25	3	2	27		3	25	1	3	22			10
Other & Short-term illness	5	34	458	2	4	15	5	11	64	4	2	220	5	14	228
Physical Mobility	3	11	73	4	8	68	2	7	101	3	4	59	1	3	47
Pregnancy			1				1	1	1	1					1
SpLD (Dyslexia, Dysgraphia or Dyspraxia)	11	62	431	31	39	540	26	38	547	21	34	507	16	36	488
Stomach Bug									19			12			9
Tendonitis/RSI		3	37	2	1	63	1	2	75	1	2	67			64

Unseen Disability (e.g. diabetes)			36	10	14	194	2	3	151	1	2	22	2	1	21
Admin issues (Late changes, timetable clash)									14						
Total per term	43	211	2,003	86	123	1,745	48	116	1,983	45	79	1,491	32	70	1,396
Total adjustments per year	2,257 ²			1,954 ²			2,147 ²			1,615			1,498		
Year on year change	+303 (+16%) ³			-193 (-11%) ³			+45 (3%) ³			+117 (8%)			+131 (10%)		

In 2020-21, there was a significant increase in the number of Exam Access Arrangements requested for the reason of ‘Other & Short-term illness’. Further investigation has revealed that this reason was incorrectly used. In light of this, further guidance has been circulated to Colleges to advise them to choose a specific reason, reflective of the student’s circumstances to allow the University to identify trends.

² Students will have been counted more than once

³ Based on actual number of students receiving EAA (see table 1)

Table 3 below shows number of candidates with exam access arrangements in an Easter Term and their spread across locations.

Table 3	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
College	110	590	879	847	826	780	695
Dept.	69	118	59	77	53	64	37
Central venue	127	339	314	243	196	239	260
PC in central location		369	346	300	247	182	150
Early venue		17	27	24	26	12	60
Online assessment	1,035						
ProctorExam	162						
Total	1,503⁴	1,433⁵	1,625	1,491	1,396	1,277	1,202
% increase	+5%	-11%	+9%	+6.8%	+8.5%	+6.2%	+2.8%

Despite an ongoing response to COVID-19 and changes to the format of assessments which resulted in a hybrid assessment model in the Easter term 2021, the majority of EAA students received their adjustments online, which reflects the main mode of assessment for that term. A significant number of students also received their EAA via ProctorExam, however, it was recognised that there is a limit as to what ProctorExam can accommodate.

⁴ Students will have been counted more than once due to sitting exams in multiple locations

⁵ Applications made before COVID-19 / changes to assessments and therefore not representative

D: Adjusted Modes of Assessment (AMA)

BACKGROUND

The Adjusted Mode of Assessment (AMA) process is applied under the Code of Practice: Reasonable Adjustments for Disabled students where examination access arrangements to the standard mode of assessment do not adequately address the specific, substantial disadvantage experienced by a disabled student. This will, in most cases, entail setting aside the regulations for examination and determining an adjustment where to do so is an effective and reasonable means of avoiding or offsetting the disadvantage.

Any AMA should meet the competence standards being measured through the current assessment method. There is no requirement to adjust the competence standards of the course. Since 2019-20, the Committee delegated authority to the Secretary to the Committee to make decisions on straightforward applications, such as extensions to periods of study, with the complex applications continuing to be considered by the Committee. This change has enabled decisions to be reached quicker, ensuring delays to implementing adjustments are minimised.

The number of approved AMA applications over the past 5 years is demonstrated in Table 4.

Table 4	2020-21	2019-20	2018-19	2017-18	2016-17
Adjusted Modes of Assessment (received)	74	45	46	29	20
Adjusted Modes of Assessment (approved)	52	37	40	20	17

The return to all summative assessments and the mixture of some in-person examinations and online assessments may have caused the increase in the number of AMA requests made in 2020-21, due to uncertainty or difficulty experienced in the previous year. Nevertheless, each application is considered on a case-by-case basis and alongside a variety of different formats of assessments.

FIRST TIME APPLICATIONS

The number of first time AMA applications over the past 5 years is shown below:

	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17
1 st year student	5 ⁶	5 ⁷	5		2
2 nd year student	14	6	9 ⁸	3	4
3 rd year student	18	9	15	5	3
4 th year student	1	1	3		

The data demonstrates that for the past 4 academic years, final year students have required an AMA for the first time during their academic career at Cambridge more than any other year group. Whilst there are various reasons for why a student would need an AMA in their final year and not in their first or second year, requests will continue to be monitored closely to ensure AMAs are only processed when appropriate.

DEADLINES

Applications must be submitted by the end of full Michaelmas Term in any year and Colleges are reminded of this deadline from the start of each Michaelmas Term and encouraged to submit applications as soon as possible as the process can take several weeks or months to resolve (where the Tripos or application is complex). The deadline is to ensure that any teaching and support can be put in place and that alternative modes can be discussed with the Faculty / Department concerned. Therefore, requests or evidence submitted later than the end of full Michaelmas Term will not usually be accepted unless there is a valid reason for delay. However, due to changes in the format of assessments in the Easter Term 2021, 21 applications were received and dealt with after the standard deadline. All AMA recommendations previously approved before this time also had to be reviewed to understand whether the change to format negated the need for adjustment or whether further adjustments were required.

- In 2020/21, 21 applications were received and processed after the deadline
- In 2019/20, 4 applications were received and processed after the deadline
- In 2018/29, 8 applications were received and processed after the deadline
- In 2017/18, 5 applications were received and processed after the deadline

Experience has revealed that applications submitted after the deadline, particularly those received in the Lent Term relating to examinations in the Easter Term, cause extra pressure for those involved in the process to reach a recommendation. Also, until the point of an approved recommendation, the student should continue their study without any changes. Late applications limit the student's time to effectively prepare for examinations without knowing their mode of

⁶ Includes a Final Vet Part II student in year 5/6, no application in years 1-3

⁷ Includes a Final Vet Part I student in year 4/6, no application in years 1-3

⁸ Includes two Final M.B. Part II students in year 5/6, no application in years 1-3

assessment until a recommendation has been approved. Whilst this was an exceptional year with many unprecedented changes, AMA were still provided in 2020-21.

ADMINISTRATION AND PROCESS

The AMA administrator has continued to provide designated support to the process which can be complex and take several weeks or months to resolve, as demonstrated again during this past year in Table 5, 6 and 7. Given the ongoing increase in numbers, complexity of applications, and resource needed to deliver the AMA process operationally, an additional administrator will be appointed in February 2022 to support both the AMA and EAA work streams.

TABLE 5 Time taken from application received to completion	2020-21	2019-20	2018-19	2017-18
Quickest:	2 days	3 days	15 days	4 days
Longest:	193 days	122 days	116 days	122 days
Average:	47 days	48 days	48 days	48 days

TABLE 6 Time taken from date of application submitted to date of case conference	2020-21	2019-20	2018-19	2017-18
Quickest:	19 days	14 days	10 days	17 days
Longest:	87 days	62 days	97 days	117 days
Average:	34 days	35 days	37 days	37 days

TABLE 7 Time taken from date of case conference to recommendation	2020-21	2019-20	2018-19	2017-18
Quickest:	1 days	3 days	1 day	1 day
Longest:	140 days	113 days	53 days	42 days
Average:	41 days	31 days	12 days	15 days

Where completed applications are approved by the Examination Access and Mitigation Committee, the application will either be progressed to case conference or dealt with via circulation. Applications dealt with via circulation are generally those where a student has had an AMA previously and there is no change to their condition or request.

Whilst the data presented above demonstrates the time required to arrange a case conference and for a recommendation to be reached following this, case conferences continue to provide a significant opportunity for Departments and Faculties to talk to the student and their advisors to better understand the disadvantage the student faces. This then allows the Examiners to establish a reasonable adjustment for the student concerned that takes into account that student's specific circumstances. Consideration of the competence standards is also pivotal to this process, as is the appropriate Faculty Board's approval and the colleagues with whom the Chair of Examiners or Senior Examiner consults to achieve this.

To preserve the integrity of Cambridge examinations, the AMA process must be rigorous, and this will subsequently mean that the process is sometimes lengthy to achieve this.

AMA / INTERMISSION

An AMA cannot prevent intermission and should not be used as an alternative to intermission where a student is not well enough to study. Where AMA have been awarded, a student may subsequently need to intermit, despite adjustments being made to their mode of assessment.

TYPES OF AMA

Different types of AMA have been delivered over the past 5 years which have included:

- Extended period of study (split one year over two, long extension to Dissertation / coursework)
- To replace a written examination with an essay or a portfolio of essays
- Bespoke paper to be written and broken up into smaller sections
- To reduce the number of questions to be answered and submit an essay

Of the 52 AMA applications approved in 2020-21, 31 students were permitted to complete an extended period of study. Whilst an extended period of study has been the most awarded AMA in the past 3 academic years, this will not always be the most suitable adjustment for a disabled student as an extended period of study will result in additional living costs for the student and their peers will move faster through the Tripos. Students who are approved to complete an extended period of study are expected to be working full time, but on a reduced workload. This is not part-time study. AMA applications should be carefully considered, taking into account the student circumstances, their disability and course.

If the AMA requested cannot meet the competence standards of the course, or effectively alleviate the disadvantage caused by the student's disability, other adjustments have been provided which has further challenged Departments and Faculties in their delivery of teaching and providing an adjustment, which has included replacing an examination with a bespoke paper or a portfolio of essays.

AMA 2021/22

- The deadline to receive AMA applications for the Academic year 2021/22 was brought forward to the end of Week 7, Friday 26 November 2021. Ordinarily, applications must be submitted by the end of full Michaelmas Term in any year. However, it is hoped that this slightly earlier deadline will allow for more time for processing, to ensure that any teaching and support can be put in place and that adjustments can be discussed with the Faculty / Department concerned.
- AMA Guidance has been updated to remind and make students and Colleges aware that:
 - The examination timetable cannot be changed because of an AMA. If it is a requirement for a student not to sit examinations on consecutive days or in the

morning or afternoon, the student will need to be accommodated locally i.e., in College and held incommunicado.

- Applications to extend a period of study, to take two Tripos Parts over three years, would not normally be approved as this would require the setting aside of Tripos standing regulations and thereby allowing students to start the next Part of the Tripos, prior to completing the current Tripos Part.
- The changed policy on release of marks for students who undertake their study over an extended period means that provisional marks will be released at each stage and not held back until all marks are available and then released when Classed.
- An AMA application should not be submitted as an alternative for a student intermitting. The College is expected to identify whether a student is fit to study.
- Two workshops were held with Colleges in September 2021 to remind and inform those involved with the AMA process. Colleges have also been approached by the team and offered support.
- Faculties and Departments involved with the AMA process continue to be supported through updated guidance and opportunities to meet to discuss AMA.

E: Committee work

MEETINGS

The Committee met 15 times in 2020-21, including three times in July. An additional meeting was scheduled to take into account the extension to the examination period due to configuration of the timetable to accommodate students taking examinations in different time zones and to ensure the maximum Moodle load capacity was not exceeded.

The numbers shown in this chapter also includes applications received as a consequence of the Second Assessment period which ran 7 – 25 September 2020.

VOLUME

In total there were more applications in 2020-21 than in the previous academic year. Despite the return of summative assessments, this was a surprising increase, given the mitigation measures in place which offered:

- **Automatic progression to subsequent year of study for first and second year Tripos students** - All first and second year undergraduate students who took the full assessment automatically progressed to their next year of study, irrespective of whether they reached the pass mark.
- **Impact statement** - If the lockdown had been detrimental to a student's research, they may have submitted a statement alongside a dissertation, project or coursework which would have been taken into account by examiners.
- **Coursework extensions** - consideration of individual applications for extensions for up to 14 days was devolved to Faculties and Departments, who also considered cohort extensions for up to 14 days.
- **Cohort equity** - Examiners in each subject ensured that the distribution of classes for 2020-21 was no less favourable than the average class distribution for the last three years before the pandemic (2016/2017, 2017/2018, 2018/2019).

The above were four of the six measures provided in the package of Assessment mitigation 2020-21 which was hoped would operate as a safety net to safeguard student achievements from the impacts of the pandemic. Whilst this may have been the case, the Committee still considered a significant number of other cases that required further mitigation.

It is noted that of those students on a programme of study that falls within the Committee's remit, 8% made an application to the Committee despite the various mitigation in place. In the most recent like for like year in 2018-19, 9% of those students eligible requested an allowance or other mitigation, where no Institution wide mitigation was available. This suggests that overall, applications to the Committee continue to rise.

REASONS FOR ALLOWANCES AND OTHER CASEWORK

The cases received this year reflect an increased pattern seen pre-COVID-19 and the number of applications for allowances based on medical reasons continue to grow, increasing the burden on the Medical Advisers. Cases for reasons of Mental Health / Anxiety / Depression continue to rise steadily. The global pandemic has of course impacted students and those who have been unable to return to Cambridge or have encountered difficulties because of studying online may account for this. The Secretary, in conjunction with the Medical Advisers and/or the Chair as appropriate, dealt with 61% of this casework under delegated authority. This is slightly lower than last year, possibly due to the mitigation available.

Table 8 details the types of allowances awarded with comparison data for the previous years.

TABLE 8	2020-21	2019-20	2018-19	2017-18	2016-17
Allowed the Examination (medical)	1	2	1	5	6
Allowed the Examination (non-medical)	1	0	0	0	8
Allowed to Proceed (medical) ⁹	49	N/A	72	19	11
Allowed to Proceed (non-medical) ¹⁰	6	COVID	34	64	59
Declared to have deserved honours (medical)	26	5	24	72	61
Declared to have deserved honours (non-medical)	1	4	4	9	3
Reconsideration of a result (medical)	48	18	98	97	56
Reconsideration of a result (non-medical)	15	20	29	12	19
Other allowances (medical)					
Other allowances (non-medical)					
Ordinary BA (medical)	5	0	1	2	4
Ordinary BA (non-medical)	0	0	0	1	3
Leave to have terms disregarded (medical)	341	235	297	260	259
Leave to have terms disregarded (non-medical)	49	69	40	47	31
Reconsideration of Original Result where the Safety Net could not be applied (2019-20 only)		3			
Resume study following disregard (medical)	266	184	242	236	216
Resume study following disregard (non-medical)	35	25	27	24	16
Consider for Put in Standing for Part III (medical & non-medical)	17	N/A COVID	9	5	6
Postgraduate Allowance – Approved for the qualification	3	Not reported – previously BGS			
Postgraduate Allowance – Allowed to be examined or re-examined	12				
Other Business					
Allowance of a term	2	11	25	8	6
Dissertation and Coursework extensions	156	116	149	131	134
Illegal combinations of papers	4	8	3	Not reported - previously GBEC	
Leave to attend courses (non-member leave)	11	18	3	16	21
Names to be withheld from Class Lists ¹¹	0	0	0	0	89
Rescind allowance	0	0	0	1	2
University Composition fee remission	38	39	35	20	15
TOTAL	1087	779	1093	1029	1025

⁹ Despite mitigation measures in place

¹⁰ Despite mitigation measures in place

¹¹ Permission no longer needed from Committee

Table 9 breaks down the medical reasons for the various forms of allowance granted:

Table 9:	2020-21	2019-20	2018-19	2017-18	2016-17
Mental Health / Anxiety / Depression	640	385	509	487	473
Physical Health affecting any part of body	81	62	205	141	112
Virus	17	20	17	41	26
Long term illness	91	58	0	14	17
Eating Disorder	12	8	10	8	31
COVID-19	15	4			
Technical Difficulties	10				
TOTAL	866	537	741	691	659

APPLICATIONS TO INVITE EXAMINERS TO RECONSIDER THEIR ORIGINAL RESULT

Each year the Committee receives a number of applications requesting that the Examiners be invited to reconsider their original result by disregarding papers, under Regulation 3(d). In 2020-21, a total of 153 applications were received for 'Reconsideration of Original Result'. 63 applications were approved and 90 were declined. This number of approved and declined applications is higher than the previous year.

The Committee declined a number of applications for the following reasons:

- Application submitted before results were known
- Under the regulation for allowances, disregarding a particular paper would not move the candidate's name to a higher class
- Insufficient academic evidence that the student would have been likely to have attained a higher class
- Remaining papers were not all at the higher class
- No clear evidence of under-performance being confined to just a small part of the examination
- Committee unable to act where lack of student responsibility resulted in incomplete papers uploaded to Moodle

Upon reviewing approved applications from the Committee, the Examiners can decide not to amend their original decision.

FEE REMISSIONS

Calls for fee remission are primarily linked to requests for disregarding terms and fee liability on students' return to study or where students are taking a course over an extended period of study. The Committee received 44 new applications for fee remissions in 2020-21 for reasons of ill health

or grave cause, an increase on the year previous (38). Of the 44 new applications for fee remission, 38 were approved (14 were AMA related), 3 were declined and 3 were withdrawn.

EXTENSIONS TO COURSEWORK AND DISSERTATIONS

Regulation 7 for Allowances to Candidates for Examinations allows the Committee to consider applications for extensions to coursework and dissertation submission. The regulation references a 'brief' extension and the guidance notes indicate that only in exceptional circumstances would a deadline of more than seven days be granted. Applications must also be submitted in advance of the deadline.

Due to the timing of applications and submission, extensions are rarely considered by the Committee and instead managed via delegated authority between the Secretary and the Chair or Senior Examiner.

Following similar mitigation measures put in place for Easter Term 2020, in Easter Term 2021 only, applications for up to 14-day extensions to dissertations, essays and coursework etc. were considered directly by departments. This again was due to the changes to assessments and COVID-19. Applications for extensions for longer than 14 days were made in the usual way, via the Committee. As a result of the mitigation measure put in place for Easter Term 2020, the data presented for the Academic year 2019-20 only shows those received for the Michaelmas Term 2019 and Lent Term 2020. The data presented for 2020-21 shows all cases received via the Committee.

	Nbr applications	Nbr received after the original date of submission	Nbr received on the original date of submission	Nbr received less than 7 days before original date of submission
2020/21	175	47	18	49
2019/20	116	18	14	38
2018/19	149	23	28	47
2017/18	131	22	24	44
2016/17	135	Information not held		

Of those 175 applications received, the length of extension requested data is as follows;

Nbr < 7 days	Nbr 7 days	Nbr < 14 days	Nbr 14 days	Nbr > 14 days
36	36	15	25	63

As the data on page 19 shows, the majority of requests for extensions are for reasons of Mental Health, which aligns with the increases seen in Adjusted Modes of Assessment, Exam Access Arrangements and Allowances.

Reason	Number	% of total
Mental Health	78	45%
Physical Health	41	24%
SpLD	6	3%
Grave Cause	9	5%
Technical difficulties	8	5%
Indirectly affected by COVID-19	13	7%
COVID-19 related (prior to authority being devolved to Departments and Faculties)	4	2%
Other	16	9%

POSTGRADUATE EXAMINATION ALLOWANCES

The transfer of matters relating to applications for Examination Allowances for students registered on the Master of Philosophy (MPhil) by Advanced Study, Master of Education (MEd), Master of Research (MRes), Master of Studies (MSt), the Diploma in Economics, the Postgraduate Diplomas in Legal Studies and in International Law and the Certificate of Postgraduate Student (CPGS) moved to the Committee following the dissolution of the Board of Graduate Studies on 1 October 2020.

The Committee expanded its membership to include a Graduate Tutor to support and embed this transfer of matters. Of the 22 applications received for a Postgraduate allowance in 2020-21, 15 applications were approved and 7 were declined.

The Committee will keep this process under review, following this first year of transfer of matters.

REVIEW PROCEDURE

The Committee may be required to review a decision made where a case has been made to the Office of Student Conduct, Complaints and Appeals (OSCCA) and after consideration by an independent reviewer, the application is upheld, or new evidence is presented.

Of the 1,242 cases considered by the Committee in 2020-21, 155 (12%) were declined. 61 cases were received by OSCCA concerning dissatisfaction with a decision made by the Committee.

Of those 61 cases:

- 15 were not eligible / withdrawn
- 20 were dismissed
- 24 were upheld
- 2 were partially upheld

Of the 24 cases upheld, 14 of these were reconsidered by the Committee in 2020-21 for the following reasons:

- 7 cases were upheld on the ground that the original decision *'is unreasonable, in that no reasonable person or body could have reached the same decision on the available evidence'*
- 4 cases were upheld on the ground of *'The availability of new evidence, which materially impacts on the outcome and which, for valid reasons, could not have been submitted at an earlier stage'*
- 3 cases were upheld on both grounds that the original decision *'is unreasonable...'* and *'The availability of new evidence...'*

Of those 14 cases, 10 were subsequently approved due to new evidence being provided or further information being provided by the student's department, and 4 upheld the original decision.

Of the 10 remaining cases that were upheld and the 2 that were partially upheld, the Committee reconsidered those cases in 2021-22 and that data will be included in the next annual report.

OFFICE OF THE INDEPENDENT ADJUDICATOR

Where students are dissatisfied with the outcome of a Review of a decision of a University Body, they can raise a complaint with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA), the external Ombudsman. The OIA will consider whether the University has followed its own procedures and whether the actions taken are reasonable in all circumstances.

Students have one year from the end of the University process to raise a complaint with the OIA, so cases upheld by the OIA and referred back to the University for consideration do not usually relate to the current year of activity.

In 2020-21, there were no cases referred back to the EAMC from the OIA.

F: Membership and Guidance Notes

MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE 2020-21

All Members are appointed by the General Board.

The Medical Advisers continue to be essential to the operation of the Committee. The Committee is well aware of the load undertaken by the Medical Advisers, particularly in light of their other responsibilities and following the response to COVID-19 and is grateful for the work and attention that they apply to the cases presented. This is evidenced in the data which shows the number of cases considered under delegated authority in 2020-21.

2020-21 has seen fewer changes to membership, but more are anticipated for 2021-22. It is hoped that the current vacancies will be filled by the end of the Lent and Easter Terms 2022, in readiness for the next academic year.

GUIDANCE NOTES

In order to make their policies and processes clearer, to both staff and students, the Committee issues Notes of Guidance and application forms continue to be reviewed annually and are available online¹². Whilst they do not have the formal status of Ordinances, they are listed in the Notice attached to the Allowances Regulations and are required in relation to requests for a Review of a decision by the Committee, and to cases that reach the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

¹² <https://www.student-registry.admin.cam.ac.uk/about-us/EAMC>

G: Looking to 2021-22

THE OIA: GOOD PRACTICE FRAMEWORK

In December 2020, the Office of the Independent Adjudicator published its Good Practice Framework: Requests for Additional Consideration for HEI providers, noting that they would be using the framework when considering complaints relating to mitigating circumstances from the academic year 2021-22.

In the Cambridge and EAMC context, this Good Practice Framework (GPF) relates to the business of examination allowances (DDH, Ordinary, Allowed to Progress, Allowed the Exam and Reconsideration of an Original Result and the PG allowances) and coursework extensions. Other business of the EAMC such as disregarding terms, illegal combinations of papers and fee remissions etc. are unaffected.

The GPF is aimed at all HEIs and does not take into account the collegiate system at Cambridge, and that link with pastoral care.

Analysis of the GPF indicated that the University was already broadly in line with the expectations of the OIA. It was noted that some areas could be enhanced to further support students and offer clarity of process. Those areas included:

Student application (GPF points 18-25)

- Point 22 of the GPF determines that 'It should be up to the student to decide whether to ask for additional consideration and what information to include in their request' and 'The student should not need permission or approval from their personal tutor (or other member of staff) for their request to be considered'.
- Currently, the Notice attached to the University regulations requires applications to be submitted by a student's Tutor (S&O 2020 page 244, Notice (i)), although in practice the Committee will consider applications made directly where the relationship between the student and college has broken down.
- The GPF also requires the process and guidance to be easily accessible, easy to follow and well-advertised.

Self-certification (GPF points 49-54)

- Point 49 of the GPF acknowledges the current pressures on the NHS and the difficulties there can be in getting appointments and follow up documentation as evidence. Further, they raise concerns about the cost of obtaining evidence and say, 'Generally, providers should not be expecting students to see their GP or other healthcare provider unless they have (or suspect they might have) a health condition that requires medical treatment'.
- The GPF does recognise that any self-certification process should be limited to a number of days (or assessments), after which further evidence would be required. Given the additional support that is available to students via their College Nurse, Tutor, Dean etc, it is assumed that students would be able to receive support and advice without going to their GP.

The Committee carefully considered those GPF areas and the implications of such changes. Concerns were expressed about how Colleges would be able to ensure that appropriate support continued to be in place for students if they were unaware of a student's circumstances. The Collegiate structure within Cambridge is one of its biggest strengths, ensuring that students have access to a wealth of pastoral support at a rate that is rarely available outside of Cambridge.

Following further consideration, the Committee discussed how the changes might be implemented and how information would be available. Colleges were made aware of this forthcoming change in practice in December 2021.

Since January 2022, applications for certain examination allowances can now be made to the Committee from a College (via Tutor or wellbeing advisor) or via direct application from a student. The EAMC website has been updated to reflect this change in practice. It also details those allowances for which students may apply directly. Guidance notes must be read and understood prior to applying and students are encouraged to seek guidance from their College Tutor, welfare advisor or tutorial office, all of which have extensive experience in gathering the evidence required, compiling, and submitting applications.

Applications will be monitored throughout 2022 and the Committee will be kept informed of such activity.

EAMC: WORKSHOPS

For the first time in several years, workshops were held with Colleges concerning the work of the Committee and Colleges were reminded of the support available with applications which included reference to the various guidance notes available on the EAMC [website](#). The Student Advice Service was also invited to these workshops.

The Admin Team understand the need for processes and guidance to be easily accessible, easy to follow and well-advertised and are looking to make further improvements to the website throughout 2021-22.