

## **Applications for Medical Intermission**

### **Notes of Guidance for Medical Practitioners**

These guidance notes are intended to assist medical practitioners who have been asked to:

1. Provide a letter to support a postgraduate student's application for an intermission on medical grounds for two weeks or longer;
2. Provide a letter which confirms that the student is fit to resume their study following a period of ill-health.

### **Background**

The Postgraduate Committee considers applications from postgraduate students for periods of intermission on medical grounds. An intermission is a break from study. Applications are initiated by the student using an online application system, and are reviewed by the student's supervisor, Department, College, and Degree Committee before being referred to the Student Registry who review applications on behalf of the Postgraduate Committee. Students applying for intermission on medical grounds must provide evidence of the reason for the application.

In its policies and decisions, the Postgraduate Committee has the following overarching aims:

- To endeavour to ensure parity of treatment between applicants who share similar circumstances, whilst recognising that each case is individual;
- To be mindful of the situation of the student body as a whole and the interests of students who are not applicants to the Postgraduate Committee;
- To support the College and Faculty in achieving an appropriate and equitable outcome for its students.

### **Medical Evidence in support of an application for intermission on medical grounds**

The Postgraduate Committee expect to receive medical evidence to support an application for intermission. Evidence is required, as opposed to merely a declaration that the student is debilitated. Medical evidence is submitted to the Postgraduate Committee by the College on the student's behalf.

The evidence:

- should be provided by a medically qualified practitioner, for example a doctor's report. Where appropriate it may consider evidence from an accredited counsellor or a disability advisor. In the case of short-term debilitation, the Committee may consider evidence from a College nurse;
- should be contemporary and provide a clear diagnosis which includes the nature and severity of the illness. If there isn't a confirmed diagnosis at the time of writing, the letter should confirm that the student's condition is under investigation;
- should state when, how, and to what extent the condition is likely to affect the student's ability to study;
- should be precise and self-explanatory. The amount of evidence required will vary from case to case. For example, hospital admission will need a shorter explanation than a less obvious or less serious condition where background information and details of the student's medical history may be required;

- [where a student is also making a request to return to study following the period of intermission] should also clearly indicate when the student is likely to be able to resume study and a clear medical plan identifying any necessary treatment to be undertaken during the period prior to the student's return to study;
- must be in English. If the documents are not originally in English the student must arrange for translation by a professional translating service;
- should be on headed paper which includes full address and role of the practitioner, dated and signed by the practitioner (or other appropriate professional).

### **Medical Evidence in support of return to study following an intermission on medical grounds**

When the Postgraduate Committee grants an intermission on medical grounds, it normally attaches a condition of proof of medical fitness to return to study. Evidence of this condition having been met is required before the student intends to return. Medical evidence is submitted to the Postgraduate Committee by the College on the student's behalf. A student may not resume study without the permission of the Postgraduate Committee.

The medical evidence confirming fitness to return to study:

- should be provided by a medically qualified practitioner who has seen the student to assess their fitness to study. Wherever possible, evidence should be provided by the same medical practitioner who made the original diagnosis. Where this is not possible, the student should arrange for the current practitioner, for example a GP or consultant, to see the medical evidence from the time of the original diagnosis to inform their judgement on the student's fitness to return;
- should include sufficient detail including a clear indication of when the student is able to resume study;
- must be in English. If the documents are not originally in English the student must arrange for translation by a professional translating service;
- should be on headed paper which includes full address and role of the practitioner, dated and signed by the practitioner (or other appropriate professional).

Courses at the University of Cambridge are particularly demanding and it is important that you are satisfied that the student is medically fit and able to cope with rigours of academic study. In cases where continued medical treatment, including psychiatric treatment, is required, the Committee needs to be satisfied that such treatment can satisfactorily be delivered in Cambridge.

### **Confidentiality**

Strict confidentiality is observed regarding medical evidence. You should be aware that the evidence you provide will be made available to the student, the student's College, relevant members of the Student Registry and Postgraduate Committee, and independent medical advisors to the Postgraduate Committee. At the student's request, in certain cases it is possible to restrict the access to medical evidence. The Postgraduate Committee and its medical advisors will use the evidence provided to determine whether or not there are grounds to approve the request for an intermission or to return to study. The College may, with the student's consent, contact you to discuss the student's case in more detail.