

Guidance notes for Exam Allowances for Undergraduate and some Postgraduate students

These guidance notes explain the exam allowances available for:

- ❖ undergraduate students
- ❖ postgraduate students on the following courses:
 - MBA and Executive MBA
 - Master of Accounting (MAcc)
 - Master of Architecture (MArch)
 - Master of Engineering (MEng)
 - Master of Mathematics (MMath)
 - Master of Science (MSci)
 - Master of Law (LLM)
 - Master of Advanced Study (MASt)
 - Masters Degree in Corporate Law (MCL)
 - Master of Finance (M.Fin)
 - Master of Music (MMus)
 - PGCE

These guidance notes are for applications relating to the academic year 2024-25. The guidance notes complement the relevant Ordinances, which can be found online in [Chapter III \(Examinations\) of Statutes and Ordinances](#).

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Appendix A: decision-tree for relevant exam allowances

Key changes for 2024-2025 guidance notes

- Students to receive the exam allowance outcome
- All decision-makers to receive the full exam allowance application
- Colleges will be informed of direct applications from students upon receipt

1. Criteria for granting an exam allowance

1.1 What is an exam allowance?

An exam allowance is a remedy for a student whose assessment(s) (exam, coursework or other formal assessment where the marks contribute to the student's formal examination result) are impacted by illness or grave cause. In such circumstances the University can grant an examination allowance so that the student is not substantively disadvantaged.

For information on how to intermit, request coursework extensions, disregard terms or other assessment related matters please see [here](#).

1.2 Who can receive an exam allowance?

These guidance notes explain the exam allowances available for all undergraduate students and students on the following postgraduate courses: EMBA; LLM; MAcc; MAST; MBA; MCL; MEng; M.Fin; MMath; MMus; MSci; PGCE, MArch.

[Different guidance](#) on exam allowances is available for students registered on the Foundation Year Programme and students registered for the MPhil by Advanced Study, MRes, MEd or MSt degrees, the Diploma in Economics, the Postgraduate Diplomas in Legal Studies and in International Law, and the Certificate of Postgraduate Study (CPGS).

1.3 What is illness or grave cause?

An exam allowance can be granted where a student has experienced illness or grave cause that is:

- a) serious;
- b) unanticipated;
- c) entirely beyond the student's control;
- d) close in time to the assessment; and
- e) evidenced by contemporaneous evidence from an independent, appropriately qualified source

1.4 Examples of illness or grave cause

Where the circumstances meet the criteria set out at 1.3 above, the following are a non-exhaustive list of examples that are **likely** to be accepted:

- short-term illness or injury;
- worsening of an ongoing illness or disability, including mental health conditions;
- symptoms of an infectious disease that could be harmful if passed on to others;
- death or significant illness of a close family member or friend;
- unexpected caring responsibilities for a family member or dependant;
- significant personal or family crises leading to acute stress;
- witnessing or experiencing a traumatic incident;
- a crime which has had a substantial impact on the student;
- accommodation crisis such as eviction or the home becoming uninhabitable;
- an emergency or crisis that prevents the student from attending an exam or accessing an online assessment.

The following list are examples of circumstances **unlikely** to be accepted:

- holidays, house moves or other planned or expected events;
- minor illness such as common colds or hay fever;
- assessments that are scheduled close together;
- misreading the exam timetable;

- forgetting or otherwise accidentally not attending exams or not submitting assessments at the appropriate time;
- poor time management;
- minor transport disruption;
- computer or printer failure where the student should have backed-up their work
- exam stress;
- minor life events, unless the circumstances have had a disproportionate impact that meets the criteria in section 1.3;
- the impact of a University sanction, including an academic penalty, as a result of academic misconduct or another breach of the University's Rules of Behaviour.

1.5 Evidencing illness or grave cause

As outlined in the criteria in section 1.3, contemporaneous evidence from an independent, appropriately qualified, source must be provided in order to be granted an exam allowance.

Evidence should include the nature, severity and impact of the illness or grave cause; it should state how the condition is likely to have affected the student's examination preparation and / or performance. The evidence should be precise, self-explanatory and where relevant, should offer a clear diagnosis from a medical professional.

Evidence should be obtained as close to the date of the examination as possible, students are expected to make use of College Nurses, Tutors and welfare staff, in addition to GP services. Evidence obtained after the impact of the illness or grave cause that states the student 'reported' they were impacted by illness or grave cause is unlikely to be sufficient. Where an existing or long-term condition is relevant to the circumstances, pre-existing evidence can be used to confirm the condition, alongside contemporaneous evidence documenting the circumstances affecting the relevant assessments.

Where a student is aware of a long-term condition that affects their day-to-day activities, it is their responsibility to seek reasonable adjustments in advance of the examination taking place. Only unanticipated worsening or changing of the condition shall be considered to meet the illness or grave cause criteria and this will need to be sufficiently evidenced.

Evidence is treated sensitively and confidentially and is only seen by decision-makers and those staff administering the decision-making processes. Consequently, redacted medical evidence is not accepted.

Evidence must be from an independent source, not family or friends, and the author must be sufficiently qualified to provide the relevant evidence e.g. a doctor is qualified to diagnose illnesses, a nurse is qualified to report medical symptoms, an accredited counsellor is qualified to confirm the engagement they have had with a student; the ADRC (Accessibility and Disability Resource Centre) can provide screening assessments or evidence of engagements regarding a student's disability. 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.

Evidence must be in English or include an official translation from a third party (not generated or translated by AI).

2. Types of Exam Allowances

Where a student's circumstances meet the criteria of illness or grave cause, in line with section 1 above, the student shall be eligible for the most relevant exam allowance, as set out in [Statutes and Ordinances](#), Chapter 3 'Examinations'. When an exam allowance is granted, conditions may be imposed, for example, requiring medical evidence of fitness to resume and sustain study.

Further information on each exam allowance is as follows:

2.1 Allowed to progress ([allowance 3a](#))

Where students have failed an examination that prevents them from continuing to the next part of the course (except for four year courses, see below), 'allowed to progress' permits a student to continue onto the next part of the course, or a different course even though they have not met all the normal requirements to do so.

A temporary 'allowed to progress' may be granted where a student is prevented from continuing to the next part of the course because the Examiners have not yet determined whether the student has passed or failed an examination because of an ongoing procedure, for example if the Student Disciplinary Procedure is ongoing. Any temporary allowance will not infer the outcome of the ongoing procedure. It is for the student to choose whether to continue with a course where they may be withdrawn partway through as a result of the ongoing procedure.

Additional criteria for the exam allowance

- Sufficient academic evidence, for example, supervision reports, that a student would have passed the examination and progressed onto the next part of the course, were it not for the illness or grave cause.
- For a temporary 'allowed to progress': the decision-maker in the ongoing process, for example the Student Discipline Officer, considers such an allowance to be appropriate in all the circumstances.

What appears on the transcript?

'Allowed to progress' appears on the student's academic transcript as the result for that examination. The enrolled papers and marks attained by the student are retained and displayed.

Fourth year courses – confirmation of illness or grave cause

'Allowed to progress' is unavailable for certain fourth year courses as entry to the course requires evidence of particular levels of previous academic performance. However, it is possible, upon application and where the student's circumstances meet the criteria for illness or grave cause, for a letter to be provided confirming this fact. The student can then provide the letter to the relevant University academic authority considering progression onto the relevant part of the course.

The fourth year courses affected are:

- Chemical Engineering Tripos Part IIB
- Computer Sciences Tripos, Part III
- Engineering Tripos Part IIB
- Management Studies Tripos
- Manufacturing Engineering Part IIB
- Mathematical Tripos Part III
- Natural Sciences Tripos, Part III

2.2 Declared to have deserved honours (DDH) ([allowances 3b\(i\) and 3c\(i\)](#)) or an Ordinary BA degree ([allowance 3b\(ii\)](#))

This allowance is for undergraduate students in their final year, or postgraduate students taking an honours degree (for example, the Master of Law), where the student has been unable to attend assessment(s); or attended but either failed or achieved results that were unrepresentative of their abilities.

Where there is sufficient academic evidence that the student would have achieved at least a Class III, or pass for postgraduate students, but for the illness or grave cause, the student can be declared to have deserved honours and receive the award of an honours degree (DDH).

For undergraduate students only, where there is only sufficient academic evidence that the student would have passed the examination at Part II, IIA or IIB, the student can be granted an Ordinary BA degree.

DDH is not a classed award and may not be acceptable for some professional requirements. Students should consider the long-term implications of replacing a Class with a DDH, which requires explanation, for example to prospective employers. If the student has a result that is unrepresentative of their abilities, a detailed reference letter from a College may be better than replacing the Class with a DDH.

Additional criteria for the exam allowance

- sufficient academic evidence for the allowance, as outlined above
- The student must have been resident in Cambridge for the required period of the academic award e.g. for a B.A. degree it is 9 terms (3 years).

What appears on the transcript?

- 'Declared to have deserved honours' appears on the student's academic transcript as the result for that examination. The enrolled papers and marks attained are retained and displayed. 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.*
- 'Ordinary BA Degree', 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)'.

2.3 Allowed the examination ([allowance 3c\(ii\)](#))

For postgraduate students who are not taking an honours degree (e.g. the MBA or the MAST degree), this exam allowance grants the degree or such other award in circumstances where the student has failed the examination, by non-attendance, non-submission or poor performance. This allowance may not be acceptable for some professional requirements.

Additional criteria for the exam allowance

Sufficient academic evidence that a student would have passed the examination were it not for the illness or grave cause, for example, partial results at pass level and supervision reports or a letter from the Supervisor.

What appears on the transcript?

'Allowed the Examination' appears on the student's academic transcript as the result for that examination. The enrolled papers and marks attained are retained and displayed.

2.4 Reconsideration of an original result ([allowance 3d](#))

For an undergraduate or postgraduate student who is undertaking an award which is 'Classed' e.g. granted a Class of 1, 2.i, 2.ii, or 3; or for postgraduates where the course is not classed but there are higher awards available e.g. Merit and Distinction. Where the illness or grave cause has only affected a single or small part of the assessments undertaken (usually up to 25% of the examination) and the student wishes to be re-classed on the basis of the unaffected assessments.

If the Committee approves the exam allowance, 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'.

Additional criteria for the exam allowance

- The student must have performed at the higher class in all of the assessments unaffected by the illness or grave cause, e.g. all those assessments other than the one or small part to be removed from the classification calculation;
- there must be sufficient academic evidence, e.g. supervision reports, that the student performed more poorly in the affected assessment than expected;
- re-classing the student on the basis of the unaffected assessments must change the student's class that has been awarded by the Examining Board, this could be the Class for a Tripos Part or the Overall Degree Class;
- the affected mark cannot have been lowered as a result of academic misconduct or a disciplinary sanction.

What appears on the transcript?

All of the original marks shall remain on the student's record and appear on the transcript, including the marks of any papers that have been disregarded in the re-classification. This allowance will not change the student's total mark. This may require further explanation to others, for example, prospective employers.

Where it is not known whether the Overall Degree Class would be changed by reconsidering the results without the affected assessment because the student is only partway through the course, the application should still be made at the time of the circumstances occurring. If the criteria of illness and grave cause is met then the application shall be made pending until such time that the Overall Degree Class is known and a decision can be made on whether the student is eligible for this allowance.

2.5 Request a paper to be marked

For a student who has submitted an assessment past the deadline due to illness or grave cause, where it will not be marked due to late submission.

Additional criteria for the exam allowance

- The request for the exam allowance should be submitted as soon as possible, without waiting for examination results, any delay in submission will need to be sufficiently explained;
- Where an application relates to coursework, it shall provide good reason for why an extension could not have been requested in advance of the deadline;

Additional Information

Applications made on the basis that the student was unaware of the correct submission deadline will be declined. The policy [Late submissions \(exams\) and submissions of](#)

[examinable materials](#) indicates that all students are responsible for ensuring that they are aware of the start and end time of their exams and those with reasonable adjustments should speak to their College to confirm the end time of their exams. The same policy also indicates that all students are responsible for their submission for an exam, irrespective of whether it is an online or in-person exam.

2.6 Re-sit¹ opportunity

A re-sit may be offered where a student's illness or grave cause has impacted more than a small part of their assessments; it has not impacted their subsequent teaching; and it is either not possible to grant an alternative allowance e.g. allowed to progress, allowed the exam, a DDH or BA Ordinary Degree, or to do so would cause substantial disadvantage, e.g. it is not acceptable for external accreditation to professional, statutory and regulatory bodies for that Tripos.

Further criteria for the allowance

- Academic evidence that the examination outcome would have been different were it not for the illness or grave cause;
- evidence that the student would be academically disadvantaged by not being given a re-sit opportunity.

Where a substantive part of the student's course has also been affected by the illness or grave cause a student should not apply for an examination allowance. Instead, a student should apply to 'disregard' the term(s) of study affected by the circumstances, and return in the following academic year to repeat study in the terms impacted by the illness or grave cause and then re-take the exams. While this option results in a further opportunity to sit the examination, it also includes study and therefore, is different from the examination allowance of 're-sit opportunity'.

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

Applications for exam allowances are submitted by email to EAMC@admin.cam.ac.uk by a College on the student's behalf (via Tutor or wellbeing advisor) or via direct application from a student, within three months of the formal notification of the student's exam results.

The application must be complete at the time of submission and the email must include all of the following:

- a completed and signed application form;
- a statement(s) from the College and/or student;
- a completed student declaration form;
- evidence of the medical circumstances or other grave cause;
- the full student support document (SSD), where appropriate, to include the disability information and document sections
- any supervision reports available. 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**.

Exceptionally, where the sender has become aware of an error in the submission of an application before the application has been considered, the application must be re-submitted in full, with an explanation for the re-submission. The date of re-submission will be used in determining at which meeting the application will be considered.

Students can expect an application to be considered at the meeting following the meeting deadline, with an outcome being sent within ten working days of the meeting date. Details of meetings and submission deadlines can be found [here](#).

Direct applications

Where a direct application is received from a student, the student's College will be informed of the application and the allowance requested, as well as the outcome in due course. The College may be asked to supply further information for the application where relevant, e.g. all supervision reports, or confirmation of relevant College action.

Students are also encouraged to seek support and make their College aware of any direct application submitted. Failure to keep the College informed, including where the Review procedure is initiated, may affect future provision (e.g. accommodation) should the exam allowance be granted.

3.2 College and student statements

Where an application is made from a College on the student's behalf, it is expected that the student's Senior Tutor or Tutor shall provide a statement. The College may wish to draw attention to any matters which it would like to be taken 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.

Students may also wish to provide a brief statement outlining the impact of the illness or grave cause. Any statement should be concise, factual and linked to the relevant criteria.

Depending on the case, it may be necessary to apply for an exam 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](#).

3.3 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 only be considered where the Secretary of the EAMC considers that there is a valid and exceptional reason for delay, based on the evidence submitted within the application.

4. Exam warnings

Guidance on exam warnings is available [here](#). Exam warnings are submitted by the College via CamSIS to act as a contemporaneous indicator that a student has experienced a problem during the examination period. No action is taken at the submission stage.

If the College subsequently makes an application for an exam allowance, the details of the exam warning will be included. If the College does not make an application, no action is taken in relation to the exam warning.

Exam warnings are not disclosed to Chairs of Examiners nor the Examination Boards. Examination Boards only consider the academic work presented and mark and class on that basis.

5. The consideration process for exam allowance applications

5.1 The Examination Access and Mitigation Committee

The Examination Access and Mitigation Committee (EAMC) is a committee of the General Board, which meets at least monthly throughout the year to consider applications for examination allowances and related matters. Its membership includes representatives from across the Collegiate membership and medically qualified members. There is also a large volume of student casework undertaken under delegated authority, much of which involves the expert opinion of its medically qualified members.

The EAMC may only consider cases and make decisions within the bounds of the authority granted within Statutes & Ordinance and in accordance with this guidance. Applications that fall outside these parameters shall be declined.

The EAMC has the following overarching aims:

- To grant relief where students would otherwise be substantively disadvantaged by illness or grave cause in relation to their assessments;
- To endeavour to ensure parity of treatment between applicants to the Committee who share similar circumstances, while recognising that each case is individual.
- To be mindful of the interests of students undertaking the same course but who are not applicants to the EAMC.

All correspondence relating to exam allowances must take place using EAMC@admin.cam.ac.uk. There must be no attempt to correspond with individual EAMC members, Examiners or the Degree Committee regarding the details of applications.

5.2 General overview

The EAMC receives copies of applications seven days prior to a meeting. Prior to the Committee meeting, the Secretary may contact the Department or Faculty for further information, e.g. information on grade boundaries.

In considering the application, the EAMC shall consider the application presented, any additional information received from the Department, Faculty or relevant University office, and any previous applications that have been made to the EAMC.

Where the criteria of a requested examination allowance have not been met, the EAMC may grant a different exam allowance to the student.

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.

5.3 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 resume study or disregard terms (colloquially known as intermission).

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.

5.4 Outcomes

Once the EAMC has made a decision an outcome letter will be sent to the College and the student via email, with the College receiving at least 24 hours' notice of the decision.

Outcome letters will normally be issued within ten working days of the EAMC meeting at which the application was considered.

6. Reviewing exam allowance decisions

Where a student is dissatisfied with the decision in relation to the exam allowance application, a review can be submitted within 14 days of receiving the decision in line with the [Procedure for the Review of Decisions of University Bodies](#).

Requests for review can only be made on set grounds: procedural irregularities; new evidence that for good reason could not be submitted with the original application; or a belief that the decision is wholly unreasonable. If the student remains dissatisfied following the review outcome, the student may take their case to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

7. Questions and further information

Any queries regarding exam allowances should be directed to eamc@admin.cam.ac.uk.

Appendix A

Decision-tree for relevant exam allowances

This decision-tree provides a general overview of the available exam allowances for undergraduate and postgraduate taught students. However, it does not include all the criteria for each exam allowance and therefore, this diagram can only be used in conjunction with the information provided in section 2 of the Guidance Notes for Exam allowances for undergraduate and postgraduate taught students.

