

Guidance notes for re-sit exam allowance for Foundation Year students

These guidance notes explain the exam allowance available for foundation year students. 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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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 where their examination has been 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 foundation year students. Different guidance on exam allowances for other types of students are available [here](#).

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 meet 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. The Foundation Year Assessment and re-sits

2.1 Assessment requirements

Successful completion of the Foundation Year results in the award of the Certificate of Higher Education in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. The regulations for this award can be found in the University's [Statutes and Ordinances](#).

To qualify for the Certificate, students must complete and pass the following:

- a) a synoptic written examination of three hours' duration;
- b) written work, consisting of three essays of no less than 2,000 words and no more than 3,000 words in length;
- c) an extended project, of no less than 4,500 words and no more than 6,000 words in length, based on a subject area of interest to the candidate.

2.2 Re-sits for failure

Where a student does not pass the course overall, subject to approval from the Board of Examiners, there will be one re-sit opportunity for the examination component (a) and/or submission of one or more component(s) (b) and/or component (c) in July.

Students that pass the course overall will not be offered any re-sit opportunity. This includes students who have attained between 40% and 65% and passed the course but may not have met the requirements for progression to Tripos.

Students who undertake re-sits for failure are not permitted to progress to Tripos, regardless of the mark obtained in the re-sit or their overall mark.

2.3 Re-sits as an exam allowance

Where, during the first sitting, a student's circumstances meet the criteria of illness or grave cause, in line with section 1 above and in accordance with the exam allowance process, the student shall be eligible to re-sit the examination component (a) in July.

No exam allowances are permitted on the other assessments within the course. Coursework extensions may be requested in relation to written work (b) and the project (c). Guidance about coursework extensions can be found [here](#). In exceptional circumstances and where the criteria for illness and grave cause are met, extensions for project (c) may be permitted into the long vacation period, with the assessment being examined at the second Examining Board (in late July/early August).

Where students obtain 65% following the re-sit examination, they may progress to Tripos.

Where a student is permitted to sit the exam component (a) as a first sitting in July, there will be no further opportunity for a re-sit during that academic year.

Where students are impacted by illness or grave cause earlier in the year, students can intermit, to take a break from their study and in some cases, repeat terms prior to assessment in the following year.

In exceptional circumstances, where students have been granted a re-sit but are unable to sit the exam in July and wish to do so in the following academic year, this may be permitted.

2.4 Consideration of re-sit results

Where a student is permitted to re-sit a component, the marks achieved will be added to the transcript. The mark used to as the formal recorded mark, will be the re-sit mark even if the re-sit mark is lower than the original mark.

The results for all re-sits taking place in July will be considered by the second Foundation Year Exam Board meeting (taking place in late July/early August).

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 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. How the EAMC considers 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 exams;
- 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 the 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 Foundation year team or College for further information, e.g. information on grade boundaries.

In considering the application, the EAMC shall consider the application presented, any additional information received by request and any previous applications that have been made to the EAMC.

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.