Contact: eamc@admin.cam.ac.uk

Guidance for exceptionally permitting illegal combinations of papers

These guidance notes explain the process of applying for, and the circumstances in which, the University may exceptionally permit a student to undertake an illegal combination of papers.

This guidance is for applications relating to the academic year 2026-27. The guidance complements the relevant Ordinances relating to Tripos, which can be found online in Chapter IV (Preliminary Examinations and Tripos Examinations) of Statutes and Ordinances.

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1. Illegal combinations of papers

1.1 What are illegal combinations of papers?

There are rules about the number and topic of papers that students undertaking Tripos examinations (primarily undergraduate students) can take, which are different for each Tripos. Where a student has enrolled in papers that do not comply with the rules, this is an illegal combination of papers.

1.2 When are illegal combinations of papers permitted?

Where a student is taking an illegal combination of papers, the student may be permitted to continue taking these papers as a result of:

- *Incuria*
  A genuine error has been made by a Director of Studies or Tutor, when advising a student. A plea of *incuria* shall not necessarily be approved.
- *Disadvantage*
  Where denying the request would seriously disadvantage the student's preparation for assessment (for example, if changes to Tripos regulations occurred whilst the student was on intermission).

1.3 Criteria for an application to permit an illegal combination of papers

Where a student wishes to make an application to continue studying an illegal combination of papers for reasons of incuria or disadvantage, the student shall also need:

- Strong support from the Faculty Board;
- A sufficient explanation for why the student believed and was advised that the combination of papers would be within the regulations, noting the College's responsibility to ensure Tutors and Directors of Study are aware of the regulations;
- That the proposed combination of papers represent a valid educational programme;
- That the student will be able to overcome any potential academic difficulties that may be encountered as a result of the combination of papers.

Applications for permission to sit an illegal combination of papers are not approved without good reason because:

- an opportunity which is available to one student should be available to all;
- both the student and their advisers should have known which combinations of papers were permissible under the regulations;
- The integrity of the structure of the Tripos is undermined by allowing too many individual exceptions to the prescribed routes through it.

2. How to make an application

Applications for permission to sit an illegal combination of papers are submitted by email to EAMC@admin.cam.ac.uk by a College on a student's behalf (via Tutor), as soon as possible.

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, including Student Declaration (found at the bottom of the application form);
- An explanation of why the illegal combination of papers occurred;

- Any indication of the additional support that the College shall provide to ensure that the student will be prepared appropriately for the examination (or a statement that no additional support is necessary);
- Confirmation that the student is aware of the consequences that may arise from any non-standard teaching provision and that they are aware of any additional support promised by the College;
- A statement from the Faculty / Department including:
    - the proposed examination entries represent a valid educational programme;
    - an indication of any potential difficulties that the student may encounter in their preparation;
    - the case is strongly supported by the Faculty Board.

Where the information from the Faculty/Department is unclear, the Secretary will contact the Faculty / Department for these assurances. This may delay presentation of the case to the Committee, and subsequent delay of an outcome.

3. The consideration process for permitting illegal combination of papers

3.1 The Examination Access and Mitigation Committee

The Examination Access and Mitigation Committee (the Committee) is a committee of the General Board, which typically meets monthly throughout the year (and more frequently during the summer) to consider applications for adjustments, allowances and related matters. Its membership includes representatives from across the Collegiate University 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 Committee 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 Committee has the following overarching aims:

- To grant remedy where students would otherwise be substantively disadvantaged by disability, illness or grave cause in relation to their study or 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 Committee.

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.

3.2 General overview

The Committee receives copies of applications a week before the meeting. Prior to the meeting, the Secretary may contact the Department or Faculty for further information.

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

3.3 Matters dealt with by delegated authority

Some matters may be dealt with by authority delegated to the Chair and/or Secretary.

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.

3.4 Outcomes

Once the Committee has made a decision, an outcome letter will be sent to the College and the student via email.

The Committee's Secretariat endeavours to issue outcome letters within 10 working days of the meeting at which the application was considered. However, during peak times, particularly June to September, it may take up to 15 working days for outcome letters to be issued. The outcomes of applications which impact a student's ability to attend a graduation ceremony or are otherwise genuinely urgent and could not have been submitted earlier by the College/Student, will be prioritised and any request for decisions to be expedited following a meeting should be made clearly in the application.

4. Reviewing illegal combinations of papers decisions

Where a student is dissatisfied with the decision in relation to illegal combinations of papers, 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.

5. Questions and further information

Any queries regarding illegal combinations of papers should be directed to eamc@admin.cam.ac.uk.