Guidance for intermission and disregarding terms for other purposes

Guidance notes for staff and students 2026-27

These guidance notes explain the processes and reasons for disregarding terms, including for intermission.

These guidance notes are for applications relating to the academic year 2026-27. The guidance notes complement the relevant Ordinances, which can be found online in Chapter III (Examinations) of Statutes and Ordinances.

These guidance notes apply to students on the following courses:

- Foundation year
- Undergraduate courses (Tripos), including integrated masters courses
- The following postgraduate taught courses:
    - MASt degrees in all subjects
    - MBA and EMBA;
    - LLM and MCL;
    - One year masters courses including: MAcc; MMus; March; MFin
    - PGCE;
    - Bachelor of Medicine, Veterinary Medicine or Surgery;
    - Bachelor of Theology for Ministry

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1. Criteria for intermission

1.1 What is intermission?

Intermission provides students with an authorised break from studies as a result of illness or grave cause. This enables students to have a period of time recovering without undertaking any study. Students are then able to return to their studies once they are ready to engage.

Periods of intermission are usually granted for a year. Students usually return to study at the beginning of the term they began their intermission, though an earlier return may be permitted for academic reasons.

Occasionally, there is also a need to 'disregard terms' – where the terms where a student has attended the course need to be disregarded, so that the student meets the criteria required for them to receive the academic award. Colleges will make these applications where relevant.

Where disregarding terms has been awarded to allow the student to be in standing for an examination, this does not negate fact, i.e. that a student was in residence, kept terms and paid fees.

1.2 Criteria for intermission

Disregarding terms, including intermission, is usually only granted where students have experienced illness or grave cause (see section 1.4); it cannot be used for employment opportunities. It may be possible to receive intermission for an internship if there is evidence that the internship is highly exceptional, related to the student's study or intended career path, and cannot be deferred. Engineering students undertaking an industry placement do not apply for intermission, instead they apply to the relevant Faculty Board process.

Intermission is granted for whole terms. It is normally granted for an academic year but may be granted for a calendar year or for another period. Where the application is not for the full academic year, the college must check with the relevant Faculty / Department that a mid-year return is academically feasible and indicate this in the relevant section on the application form.

When an application is made for a student to intermit after the start of the academic year, the College should confirm whether any work has been submitted that may need to be carried forward. This request should be included in the application form and is not automatically approved.

Only if there are solid academic reasons for allowing a student to repeat the teaching of a completed term will this be permitted.

Intermission cannot be used to avoid the Student Disciplinary Procedure. However, where circumstances require it, students may intermit while a disciplinary process is ongoing. Applications to consider disregarding terms to repeat teaching can only be considered following the outcome of any disciplinary process.

Maximum permitted intermission/disregarding terms

Students will be permitted up to three years of intermission or disregarding terms. Only one year will be granted at a time, and further applications must be accompanied by evidence demonstrating further periods of intermission or disregarding terms are necessary.

Where a student receives three years of intermission there shall be no further periods of intermission granted, regardless of the circumstances. This is to ensure parity between students and maintain currency of the academic knowledge required for the academic award.

The University has determined that all students shall be permitted up to three years, rather than two years with an 'exceptional' third year, to remove any possibility or perception of subjective decision-making in determining who is permitted a third year.

It is noted that there are some professional courses who would only be permitted to undertake three years of intermission if also granted an exceptional extension to the time limit confirmed by the professional body. The University is bound by decisions made by the professional body, and a period of intermission will not be granted if the student would no longer be eligible for the academic award. Students who have already had three years of intermission/disregarding terms but are still unable to return to studies will be withdrawn.

1.3 Retrospective intermission

Where a student has failed their examinations as a result of illness or grave cause, and did not apply for an exam allowance, a retrospective intermission can be sought if the student had been impacted during their studies by illness or grave cause and had not disclosed this information to College for a valid and evidenced reason.

Where circumstances adversely affecting a student's studies are known to the student during the academic year, and those circumstances have been disclosed to the College, the student is expected to consider, with the support of the College, whether it remains appropriate for them to continue their studies and undertake their assessments. Where a student could reasonably have sought intermission before the examination period but continued study and undertook their assessments, this will not provide a basis for retrospective intermission after the event. The only circumstance where an exception may be made is if the Committee considers there is sufficient, contemporaneous medical evidence to demonstrate that the student lacked the capacity to make decisions about continuing study and attempting examinations during the period in question.

If retrospective intermission is granted then students will be able to return in the following academic year, or following a further period of intermission (if granted). Students granted a retrospective intermission will repeat at least one term of study, or more, and re-sit all of the relevant assessments due in the relevant terms. Guidance notes on exam allowances are available here.

1.4 What is illness or grave cause?

Intermission 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; and
d) evidenced by contemporaneous evidence from an independent, appropriately qualified source

While intermission is primarily for illness or grave cause, there can be exceptional circumstances, where some legally mandated, anticipated events require an intermission, for example, required military service. Applications may also be made regarding activities that are highly exceptional and cannot be deferred. All anticipated circumstances must be

applied for in advance of them commencing, as such applications may not be approved and in such instances students may be unable to return to study.

1.5 Examples of illness or grave cause

Where the circumstances meet the criteria set out at 1.4 above, the following are a non-exhaustive list of examples that are **likely** to be accepted:

- 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;

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;
- poor time management;
- minor transport disruption;
- minor life events, unless the circumstances have had a disproportionate impact that meet the criteria in section 1.4;
- 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;
- jury duty, instead students should apply to undertake jury duty during the long vacation;
- financial difficulty (students are required to ensure they have appropriate funding for the course in advance of commencing study).

1.6 Evidencing illness or grave cause

As outlined in the criteria in section 1.4, contemporaneous evidence from an independent, appropriately qualified, source must be provided in order to be granted intermission.

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 studies. The evidence should be precise, self-explanatory and where relevant, should offer a clear diagnosis from a medical professional. Bereavement requires evidence in the form of a death certificate or equivalent.

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 presently affecting the student's studies.

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, accredited translation from a third party (not translated by the student themselves or generated by the student or others using AI or any other unofficial translation services).

The University may check the veracity of any independent evidence that is included in the application. Any evidence that is suspected to have been amended, only partially submitted or falsified in any way will be reported as a suspected breach of the Rules of Behaviour and the consideration of the application will be paused until any investigation has been completed.

2. How to make an intermission application

2.1 General information

Applications for intermission should be submitted by email to EAMC@admin.cam.ac.uk by a College on the student's behalf (via Tutor or wellbeing advisor). Applications received from students directly will be accepted but students are encouraged to seek the support of their College in all circumstances. Where an application is received directly, the College will be informed by the University.

Timeframes
Intermission applications should be made in the term where the student's studies were substantively impacted by the illness or grave cause, but in any case must be submitted prior to the start of the student's Easter Term exams. The only exception is for retrospective intermission applications, which are submitted within 14 days of the publication of the student's exam results.

Important: Where a student applies for intermission just before the start of exams, they are unlikely to know the outcome before their exams commence and, unless their studies were substantially impacted, they may be offered an exam allowance instead of intermission, or neither remedy if their circumstances do not meet the criteria. If the student chooses not to sit their exams and subsequently does not meet the criteria for intermission or an exam allowance, then they will be withdrawn. Consequently, students are strongly advised to make intermission applications as early 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);
- a statement(s) from the College and/or student;
- 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 becomes aware of an error in the application before it has been considered, the corrected application must be re-submitted, in full, with an explanation for the re-submission in the covering email. The date of re-submission will be used in determining at which meeting the application will be considered.

Details of EAMC meetings and application submission deadlines can be found here. An application will be considered at the next upcoming meeting for which it has met the application submission deadline.

2.2 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 'Disregard a paper' alongside a period of disregarding terms. Full details can be found in separate guidance notes here.

3. The consideration of intermission applications

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 applications 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/Faculty or College for further information.

In considering the application, the Committee 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 Committee.

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. Fitness/Capability to Study

4.1 University's Support and Capability to Study Procedure

Where a student does not wish to intermit but there are concerns that the student does not have the capacity to fully engage with student life, a College or University Support and Capability to Study Procedure, or Fitness to Study Procedure shall be initiated.

The University's Support and Capability to Study Procedure is available here. The Committee may refer a student to the University's Procedure.

4.2 Disregarding terms following the outcome of a College or University Capability to Study or Fitness to Study process

The Committee recognises that College Fitness to Study processes (or other similarly titled support processes) and the University Support and Capability to Study Procedure may result in a student being temporarily withdrawn from study.

In order that the student remains in standing for examination, an application for disregarding terms following this decision will be approved without need to supply medical or other evidence from that College process.

A short letter from the Senior Tutor is all that is required with the application form when submitting such an application. It remains essential that any application made under these circumstances should be shared with the student.

This action is taken noting that the decision to temporarily withdraw a student shall be subject to procedural appeal routes and the complaint process of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator, the external ombudsman for Higher Education students.

5. Resuming Study

5.1 General Information

A student cannot resume their studies unless an application to Resume Study has been approved by the Committee. For Guidance and details of the procedure please see here.

Fee remission

The fee remission process is managed by the Fee Remission Panel. For queries about or how to apply for fee remission, please contact the Secretary of the Fee Remission Panel at feestatusandpolicy@admin.cam.ac.uk with any questions.

Extending intermission

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International Students

Where an overseas student disregards terms, there may be implications for the University and for the individual student for visa requirements. In the first instance the college should contact the International Student Office.

6. Reviewing intermission 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 disregarding terms should be directed to eamc@admin.cam.ac.uk.