

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

STANDING COMMITTEE ON APPLICATIONS

GUIDANCE NOTES TO STUDENTS ON EXAMINATION ALLOWANCES

These notes of guidance have been issued to all Senior Tutors and Tutors. They are also being issued to students to inform them of the circumstances under which an allowance can be made and the criteria for the award of such allowances. Students, however, should note that an application to the Committee can only be made by the student's Tutor. Any student who believes they meet the conditions and fulfil the criteria for an allowance should consult their Tutor.

Introduction

The purpose of these notes is twofold. Firstly to provide guidance on the documentation that the Committee requires in order to process applications. Secondly the document explains the circumstances under which the committee will grant allowances, remove candidates from class lists or refer the matter to the Chair of Examiners for a change of class.

Examination allowances under Regulation 3 (pages 215 of Statutes and Ordinances, 2005) are granted to candidates who have suffered from illness or other grave cause and have been prevented from taking an examination, or whose performance has been adversely affected, as a consequence.

The Committee will normally grant only one examination allowance to a candidate during their undergraduate career.

This form should be accompanied by a covering letter from the Senior Tutor setting out the case, including the relevant circumstances. Applications for examination allowances must be accompanied by the following information:

- all supervision reports for the student;
- the profile of marks including the marks obtained in any examination attended and any other component of assessment (such as dissertation or essay marks);
- details of the classification rules where known;
- confirmation whether an Examination Warning has been submitted;
- medical evidence or independent, corroborating evidence of grave, extenuating circumstance (such as the death of a close relative or partner).

Incomplete or partially completed applications will *not* be considered and will be referred back to the College as will those cases that do *not* comply with the following criteria relating to the relevant allowance being sought.

Medical Evidence.

By medical evidence the Committee requires one of the following:-

- a doctor's report, preferably from a doctor based in Cambridge;
- a report from the University Counselling Service or an accredited Counsellor;
- a report from the College nurse (in the case of short-term, but debilitating, illness).

which must be obtained prior to completion of the examination. Supporting letters from relatives, friends or anecdotal sources of information do not constitute medical evidence and are not acceptable to the Committee.

Medical evidence is provided for consideration by the Medical Advisers of the Applications Committee and strict confidentiality is observed by those Medical Advisers such that it is not passed on to any third party.

Other Grave Cause

In cases relating to grave cause the Committee requires the following:

- independent, corroborating evidence from an appropriate professional but not a relative or anyone with a close personal connection with the student or family.

Insufficient Academic Evidence

Where the medical evidence is strong but there is insufficient academic evidence (primarily from supervision reports) to demonstrate that the candidate would have been likely to have attained honours in the examination the committee may either:

- (i) grant an allowance towards the ordinary BA Degree (note the Council will not normally make more than one such allowance during a candidate's undergraduate career and it is most commonly used to cater for candidates who have failed their final year);
- (ii) put the candidate in standing to proceed as if he/she were eligible to continue;
- (iii) grant leave to degrade so that the candidate is of standing, subsequently, to take the same Part, or that of another Honours examination.

Degrading and the role of the University

The University's jurisdiction relates to those students needing exceptional permission to go out of residence on medical grounds or extenuating circumstances. The University's authorisation is required so that the student can remain in standing to take University examinations which otherwise would not be the case because the student would not have kept the necessary terms of residence. The Council has delegated this responsibility to the Applications Committee together with all other forms of examination allowances for University examinations apart from those excluded under Regulation 3 (page 218, Statutes and Ordinances 2007) which involve different authorities such as Graduate examinations which are the responsibility of the Board of Graduate Studies.

Degrading and repeating years

It is University policy that students do not repeat years, primarily because it is thought that this would give the students an advantage over other students, hence the allowance system. The Committee, therefore, would expect that where a student has already completed two thirds of the academic year, and the College submits an application, they will either ask for the student to be allowed the examination or to be put in standing to continue. There is therefore no need to ask leave for the student to degrade for the Easter Term although in certain cases it may be necessary to ask the Committee to allow a term of residence so that the student has the correct standing. Although the Committee may grant leave to degrade for students taking the Medical and Veterinary Science Tripos this does not also automatically put them in standing for the relevant MB examination. A separate application must be submitted to the Secretary of the Fitness for Medical Practice Committee which may also request reports on student progress before readmission.

In exceptional circumstances the Committee would permit a student to degrade for the purpose of retaking the year. This would normally be for a student in the final year of their degrees. A case for this would have to be made by the College which would normally relate to significant and sustained ill-health throughout the year. By repeating the year the Committee does mean repeat the year, including all the assessments. Requests for students to repeat the year but not do the assessment by submitted work are not acceptable, as doing so would clearly give the students an advantage over other students in the same cohort. In very exceptional circumstances the Committee has allowed students to return for the following

Easter Term **only** and to re-take the exam. Again, however, a strong case would need to be made by the College, particularly for those students who had been in residence for most of the academic year.

Fitness to return into residence.

In medical cases, the Committee requires evidence of fitness to resume before students return into residence. It is the Committee's responsibility, via its Medical Advisers, to evaluate such evidence for the purpose of determining fitness to resume.

Wherever possible, medical evidence confirming fitness to return should be provided by the same person who made the original diagnosis. Where this is not the case, the practitioner should consider the medical evidence from the time of the original diagnosis and make a judgement on the student's fitness to return on the basis of this evidence. Students, therefore, should do one of the following:

(i) to arrange for their original letter to be given to the GP or consultant (including psychiatrists) undertaking the assessment to determine the student's fitness to return;

or

(ii) ask them to communicate with the individual who made the original diagnoses;

In cases where continued medical treatment is required, the individual providing the certificate for fitness to return should consider whether the treatment could be satisfactorily delivered in Cambridge.

Note: Colleges should not permit a student to return into residence or retake the year without having already obtained the permission of the Applications Committee.

THE APPLICATION PROCESS

A request to the Committee to declare the candidate to have attained the Honours standard in cases where the student has missed all, or some, of the examination and has not been classed by the examiners.

The Committee would normally declare a student to have deserved honours under the following circumstances:

where the candidate has not done any of the examination;

or

where the candidate completed part of the examination but was absent from some part of it and the examiners have not classed the candidate;

AND

there is clear evidence that the candidate was prevented from taking the examination because of a medical condition;

or

there is clear evidence that the candidate's performance in the examination was impaired by a medical condition either during the examination period itself or in the preparatory period leading to the examination;

or

clear evidence of other i.e. non-medical, extenuating circumstances which either prevented the candidate from taking the examination or impaired his or her performance in the examination either during the examination period itself or in the preparatory period leading to the examination.

AND

there is sufficient academic evidence primarily from the Supervision Reports to show that the candidate would have passed the examination but for a medical condition or extenuating circumstances.

Remove from class list and declared to have deserved honours or change of Class where the candidate has been classed by the examiners

Where a candidate for a Tripos or other Honours exam has been classed by the Examiners but that class is regarded as not reflecting the candidate's ability because:

- there is clear academic evidence (primarily from supervision reports and formally assessed work) to show that they had consistently performed at a higher level during the academic year

AND

- clear evidence of a medical condition or other extenuating circumstance having impaired their performance on all, or part, of the examination.

Then the Committee may:

- remove the candidate from the class list and declare them to have deserved honours;
- permit the Chair of examiners to move the candidate to a higher class if the Chair is satisfied that the candidate has performed at the standard of the higher class concerned in all but a relatively small part of the examination (Regulation 3(d)(ii)).

Please note that the Committee itself cannot change the class of degree. If the Committee believes there is sufficient evidence to make a case then it will refer the matter to the Examiners, who will make the decision.

Both of the above decisions - declared to have deserved honours and change of class - need to be confirmed by Grace.

Candidates not for Honours - Allowances

The allowances for these examinations are complicated. The Secretary of the Committee should be consulted before submitting applications for these examinations.

A candidate's status as 'Not for Honours' is determined by his/her ineligibility as an Honours candidate, normally because he/she have already obtained the BA, or higher qualification, from the University, or because of the status of the examination.

The Committee can make allowances to candidates who are 'not for honours' under the same circumstances as candidates who are following honours examinations given above. The allowances the committee can give are however, different.

Regulation 3(ii), permits the Committee to allow the candidate one, or where it is consistent with the regulations for the Ordinary BA, two Ordinary examinations.

In the case of Pass/Fail Examinations the Committee can, where there is sufficient evidence, both medical and academic, declare the to candidate to have passed the examination.

Examinations where the Applications Committee is not authorised to grant allowances

The Committee is not authorised to grant allowances for the following examinations:

- a) **graduate qualifications which are the responsibility of the Board of Graduate Studies;**
- b) **qualifications such as the MB and the PGCE which relate to, or incorporate an element of professional practice which are excluded from the system of examination allowances;**
- c) **some Diplomas and Certificates (Note: the Committee is normally able to allow the examination if there is a system of supervision reports but please contact the Secretary of the Applications Committee who may be able to offer advice).**

Note: Any student failing the Second MB examination subject twice is automatically excluded from the Medical Student Register although in certain cases the College may apply to the Faculty Board of Clinical Medicine for additional second attempts. For further information: <http://bio.cam.ac.uk/sbs/facbiol/mvst/tutors>.