

College Transfer Procedures

Approved by the Senior Tutors' Committee, 4 November 2022.

1. General principles:

- 1.1 These procedures are owned collectively by the 31 Cambridge Colleges under the auspices of the Office of Intercollegiate Services; the University of Cambridge does not have any ownership or decision-making powers in relation to these procedures as matters of College admission fall outside its remit.
- 1.2 The Cambridge Colleges operate individually with legal autonomy and independence, but are collectively committed to addressing the needs of applicants and students in a collegiate manner.
- 1.3 Under this procedure, no College is obliged or otherwise compelled to admit a student who has already matriculated at another College.
- 1.4 College transfers are not normally possible. Colleges will only agree to consider transfers on an exceptional basis and when there are compelling grounds for doing so. Any transfer of a student is subject to the agreement of both the outgoing and incoming Colleges. It should be noted that the transfer process, being exceptional, can be lengthy.
- 1.5 A student will need to clear their original College financial account before any transfer of College can be enacted.
- 1.6 An offer of accommodation from another College when the student's own College is unable to provide accommodation would not normally justify a transfer, since it is possible to be accommodated in a College without becoming a member.
- 1.7 Whilst the Colleges undertake to consider requests in a constructive and consistent manner and in accordance with the same principles, these procedures do not preclude any Colleges arranging the transfer of a student via local resolution outwith these procedures, subject to both the incoming and outgoing Colleges together with the student/applicant agreeing that a transfer should take place. Such informal transfers shall be reported in accordance with Section 6 below.
- 1.8 Only under very exceptional circumstances will a transfer be considered if the student is within three months of completing their qualification, and never after the academic requirements of their course have been met.

2. All transfers mid-course – undergraduate and postgraduate students

2.1 Eligibility

- 2.1.1 Transferring Colleges mid-course is not normally possible, and the reasons for seeking such a transfer would need to be substantial and very compelling. It would not be sufficient, for example, for a student to say that they prefer another College, find their current College's location inconvenient, or have friends in another College.
- 2.1.2 Students should speak to their College Senior Tutor (or to a College-appointed deputy in cases where the Senior Tutor is conflicted or the responsibility for such matters rests elsewhere), to discuss a transfer. Students wishing to transfer College should **not** contact other Colleges directly.
- 2.1.3 The following reasons may potentially be considered substantial and compelling:
- a) disability, serious medical need, or other special need that cannot be met by a student's own College but can reasonably be met by other ones;
 - b) the irretrievable and significant breakdown of a student's relationship with their present College;
 - c) a traumatic event or series of events affecting the student for which professional advice has been obtained that indicates that it would be extremely undesirable to remain at their present College.
- 2.1.4 These procedures are intended to facilitate clear and transparent consideration of requests based on the eligibility criteria above. It is therefore deemed to be in the interests of all parties that the Panel's process of coming to a decision about an application will normally be suspended in cases where:
- a) the student commences or has already commenced a complaint against their College and/or the University and the complaint has not been fully resolved;
 - b) the student is the subject of, or becomes the subject of, any disciplinary procedure of the College and/or the University, and where the procedure has not been fully completed (including an internal appeal process relating to such a procedure).

The Panel reserves the right to suspend any decision about a case until clear evidence has been provided to confirm that the conclusion of such procedures has been reached.

2.2 The Process

- 2.2.1 Prior to making a request to transfer students should consider carefully whether they meet the eligibility criteria outlined above, i.e. whether they have substantial and very compelling grounds. They may wish to consult their Tutor or the Students' Unions' Advice Service to determine whether they have a case, on what grounds, and how best to present it.
- 2.2.2 Where a student has determined they may have a case, they should approach their College Senior Tutor or College-appointed deputy (hereafter 'the Senior Tutor') to discuss this.
- 2.2.3 If the Senior Tutor agrees that the student may have a case to request a transfer, the Senior Tutor and the student will collaborate to complete the College Transfer Request Form for mid-course transfers. All relevant information and available evidence to support the student's case, including, for instance, any application and non-medical evidence already submitted to the Exam, Access and Mitigation Committee or the Postgraduate Committee, should - with the student's consent - be included with the form and sent by the Senior Tutor to the Office of Intercollegiate Services (OIS), which supports the administration of the process.
- 2.2.4 Where the Senior Tutor does not agree that the student has a case for a transfer, the student may still present their case to the Panel for consideration without College support. In any case the paperwork must be submitted to OIS via the College and the request form must indicate whether the Senior Tutor supports the student's application or not, with reasons provided.
- 2.2.5 Whether or not the Senior Tutor supports the student's request, the Panel will consider the case.
- 2.2.6 The Panel meets regularly and, on submission of a new request, will a) determine whether it upholds the student's case that the grounds to request a transfer are justified; and b) where it agrees a transfer is justified, authorise OIS on its behalf to approach a shortlist of Colleges to be approached for the possible transfer in of the student. In determining any shortlist of Colleges to approach for transfer, the Panel may provide specific advice to OIS, to consider the needs and circumstances of the student.
- 2.2.7 Where the Panel rejects or suspends a decision about an application, reasons will be provided in writing to the Senior Tutor of the original College. Such reasons might include the need to see an ongoing formal procedure through to full conclusion as outlined in paragraph 2.1.4. It is the responsibility of the original College to relay this to the student.
- 2.2.8 Where the Panel approves the request, the details of the case will be sent to all the Senior Tutors of the Colleges on the shortlist in parallel, inviting consideration and comment. The details provided (including supporting evidence) will take due account of the consent or otherwise of the requesting student.

- 2.2.9 For mid-course transfer requests, the shortlist will be limited to five Colleges. For postgraduate applicant transfer requests, the number of Colleges on the shortlist is not limited.
- 2.2.10 Whilst the shortlisted Colleges will be contacted simultaneously, in the interests of procedural fairness measures will be taken to ensure that the identities of the individual Colleges are not visible to one another. These Colleges will be given a reasonable timeframe in which to respond (usually two weeks). If unable to accept a transfer, the College will normally be expected to explain why.
- 2.2.11 Following receipt of all the shortlisted Colleges responses, the Panel will review the responses and on the basis of these will determine to which College the student should transfer.
- 2.2.12 Once the possibility of a College transfer has been determined by the Panel, it will be communicated to the original College and to all the Colleges on the shortlist within five working days of the Panel having decided on where the student should transfer. The original College shall have responsibility for conveying the Panel's decision to the student.
- 2.2.13 In the event that none of the shortlisted Colleges are able to accept a transferring student, a second shortlist will be prepared and activated, and if necessary the process (2.2.11-2.2.13) will continue until all appropriate options have been exhausted. The original College will be kept informed when each new shortlist has been drawn up.
- 2.2.14 If no transfer can be agreed, the Administrative Secretary will communicate this without further delay to the original College, which will be responsible for issuing a 'Completion of procedures letter' confirming this to the student.¹

2.3 Right of Review

- 2.3.1 Where the Panel determines that a student does not have grounds for a transfer of College, the student can ask for this to be reconsidered by an Independent Reviewer on one or more of a number of grounds. Details of the review procedure can be found in Appendix A.

¹ <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/providers-and-good-practice/completion-of-procedures-letter.aspx>

2.4 Notes

- 2.4.1 Students should provide a detailed account of their request for transfer, outlining any particular circumstances which are pertinent. If a student is applying on the grounds of disability or a medical condition, the fullest possible account of their specific needs should be provided, for example details of any restrictions to their mobility, maximum distances that are manageable on foot, whether ground floor accommodation or en-suite facilities are required etc. Students should justify their request with whatever supporting information and evidence they wish to be considered, including medical evidence. It is expected that they will consent to the inclusion of any submissions already considered by the Exams, Access and Mitigation Committee or Postgraduate Committee: disclosure of such information will ensure an appropriately informed decision and facilitate the provision of any ongoing support required.
- 2.4.2 In the unlikely event that a student wishes to transfer to a specific College, this can be noted on the application form with detailed reasons to ensure the Panel can give this due consideration.
- 2.4.3 Students should, however, note that preference for another College is not in itself regarded as providing sufficient grounds for a College transfer, and that the shortlist of suitable Colleges for transfer (if the application is considered justified) may or may not include this preferred College, at the discretion of the Panel. In making a request for a transfer, students agree to accept the decision of the Panel in determining a suitable College in all the circumstances.
- 2.4.4 These procedures allow for the possibility of the members of the Panel and/or OIS taking informal soundings from prospective shortlisted Colleges regarding the suitability of their College in relation to a student's individual needs and circumstances. Furthermore, the Panel reserves the right to contact a student directly for further information about their case.
- 2.4.5 OIS will retain historical data about previous transfers to inform any shortlisting decision and will maintain records of all transfer requests considered. This is to ensure that, wherever possible, no College or Colleges are unfairly burdened with the responsibility of multiple transfers. The data shall be maintained by OIS (as a data processor) on behalf of the Colleges (joint data controllers) and shall be subject to the data protection principles in force at any given time.
- 2.4.6 A College considering a request to receive a student may take into consideration issues such as capacity within the particular subject, or the availability of appropriate accommodation and College facilities; it may not make a decision based solely on its assessment of a student's academic ability. The Senior Tutor of any of the shortlisted Colleges may request further information about the student's case if required.

- 2.4.7 In submitting an application, a student gives consent for the details of their case to be seen by the Panel and, if the Panel upholds their transfer request, the student's form and supporting evidence/documentation (with consent) will be circulated on a strictly 'need to know' basis within any College asked to consider receiving the student (e.g. to the Senior Tutor or Graduate Tutor, Director of Studies and, if applicable, College Nurse or Counsellor, and to the Accessibility and Disability Resource Centre.)
- 2.4.8 Depending on the circumstances, the Panel may require additional evidence to be provided to support an application and it reserves the right to request this from either the original College or directly from the student.
- 2.4.9 Where a mid-course transfer of College is enacted, the transfer will normally take effect from the start of the subsequent term for the purposes of fees.

3. Changing Colleges between courses that require separate applications

- 3.1 A change of College is common between courses that require separate formal applications (e.g. between undergraduate and Masters or between Masters and PhD courses), and partnered funding schemes between Colleges and other Cambridge funding providers may make a change of College between Masters and PhD more likely (see Section 4.2 below).
- 3.2 If the student wishes to apply to another College or Colleges for one of these courses they should do so independently through Postgraduate Admissions as a completely new application, noting any advice on the websites of the Postgraduate Admissions Office and any College or Colleges to which they intend to apply.
- 3.3 Tutors at the student's existing College may offer help and information but will not normally be actively involved in seeking a new College.
- 3.4 In the first instance, College allocation is managed on the basis of the preference(s) that the student states in their application form. Those students with existing College membership may wish to apply to other Colleges to complete a new course where there is available funding and where a condition of eligibility for that funding requires listing that College as their first- or second-choice in their application. Should the student be unsuccessful in receiving an offer of a place at their preferred College(s), their placement at a College will instead be determined via the computerised allocator process. In these circumstances, should the student wish to return to the College with whom they have existing membership, there is collective agreement between the Colleges that the allocated College will rescind their offer to allow a student to transfer back to their existing College on an informal basis (i.e. without requiring Panel intervention).
- 3.5 The student's right to request reallocation to their existing College also applies where they are unsuccessful in securing funding and are offered a place at their first or second choice College without funding.
- 3.6 Returning to an existing College in these circumstances is **not** an automatic right; it must be requested by the student **within ten working days** of the allocated College accepting them AND the existing College must agree to accept the student.
- 3.7 It is the responsibility of the outgoing College to record any informal transfers between courses that require separate applications and to report them to OIS for the purposes of compiling an annual report (see Section 6).
- 3.8 Guidance on College preferences at graduate admission is provided on the Applicant Portal and graduate study web pages.

4. Transfers during or very shortly after the postgraduate admissions process

- 4.1** Applicants may change their College preference(s) within 14 days of submitting a postgraduate application as long as a formal offer to study has not yet been made. Requests should be made by the applicant by contacting pg.admissions@admin.cam.ac.uk

Thereafter requests for a transfer of College will be considered only on the grounds of an offer of funding from another College (4.2), disability (4.3), or other compelling circumstances (4.4.). Owing to the timelines required for considering and processing formal transfer requests (4.2 and 4.3), it is highly unlikely that a positive outcome to such requests will be possible beyond the end of August.

4.2 Offers of funding

- 4.2.1** If an applicant receives a substantial offer of funding of at least £5,000 towards the total cost of the course, either solely or as part of a matched funding agreement, from a College that has not already offered them membership, then that offer of funding is likely to be conditional on the applicant transferring to that College. In such cases, the Colleges have collectively agreed that an informal transfer (i.e. one without requiring Panel intervention) would automatically be justified and applicants should contact their allocated College in the first instance to request a transfer on these grounds. It is the responsibility of the outgoing College to report transfers of this nature to the Administrative Secretary for the purposes of compiling an annual report (see Section 6).
- 4.2.2** If an applicant receives an offer of funding which equates to less than £5,000 towards the total cost of the course, the right to transfer informally would not be automatic, but could take place if all parties (the applicant and both affected Colleges) agreed to it. In these cases the allocated College should manually override the application. It is the responsibility of the outgoing College to record any informal transfers of this nature and report them annually to the Administrative Secretary for the purposes of compiling an annual report (see Section 6). As transfers of this nature are deemed informal and at the discretion of the Colleges involved, the applicant would have no recourse to seek the Panel's adjudication should an informal transfer not be agreed by both affected Colleges, but will be eligible to submit a complaint to their formal College.

4.3 Disability and Health Issues

- 4.3.1 The University and the Colleges operate a joint allocation process for postgraduate applications, where the applicant is not accepted by their first-choice College. At the end of the process, the applicant is made an offer of membership by one of the Colleges. In circumstances where the applicant has concerns about whether the College can meet needs required by their disability or health issues, the applicant should contact the Postgraduate Admissions Office for advice and guidance. The Postgraduate Admissions Office will provide support to ensure the concerns are given full consideration by their allocated College and the University's Accessibility & Disability Resource Centre.
- 4.3.2 Applicants should provide the fullest possible account of their disability and highlight any specific needs (e.g. accommodation requirements, College facility requirements, potential geographical constraints - i.e. details of any restrictions to their mobility, maximum distances that are manageable on foot). The Accessibility & Disability Resource Centre will, as appropriate, provide further advice and guidance to the applicant and the College. In the majority of cases no transfer will be required as reasonable adjustments can normally be made by the allocated College.
- 4.3.3 Should the College agree that it cannot meet the specific needs of the disability or health issue, the applicant and College will submit a formal College transfer request to the Panel, where it will undertake the process set out in Section 2.1. The Panel may wish to engage with the College over the extent to which it has made efforts to make appropriate and reasonable adjustments.
- 4.3.4 In exceptional cases where the allocated College deems it can make appropriate adjustments, but the applicant does not agree, a formal request for a Review may be submitted to the Panel. The applicant will be asked to demonstrate why the College's provision remains inadequate or inappropriate, and the College will be asked to confirm that they cannot make any further adjustments to their provision. Should the Panel agree with the case put forward by the applicant at this stage, it will undertake the process of requesting other Colleges to consider a transfer (as set out in Section 2.1 above). Should the Panel conclude instead that the provision of the College is appropriate and reasonable, the request to consider a transfer to another College will be refused, and the applicant will be invited to consider their offer to include membership of the allocated College. There is no further right of review for this decision (see Section 4.5).

4.4 Other compelling grounds

- 4.4.1 The University and the Colleges operate a joint allocation process for postgraduate applications, where the applicant is not accepted by their first-choice College. At the end of the process, the applicant is made an offer of membership by one of the Colleges. In circumstances where the applicant has compelling grounds to need to be made an offer of membership by a different College, the applicant should contact the Postgraduate Admissions Office for advice and guidance. The Postgraduate Admissions Office will provide support to ensure the concerns are given full consideration in the first instance by their allocated College.
- 4.4.2 Should the College agree that it cannot address the concerns, the applicant and College will submit a formal College transfer request to the Panel, where it will undertake the process set out in Section 2.1. The Panel may wish to engage with the College over the extent to which it has made efforts to make appropriate and reasonable adjustments.
- 4.4.3 In exceptional cases where the allocated College deems it can address the concerns, but the applicant does not agree, a formal request for a Review may be submitted to the Panel. The applicant will be asked to demonstrate why membership of the allocated College remains inappropriate, and the College will be asked to confirm that they cannot address these. Should the Panel agree with the case put forward by the applicant at this stage, it will undertake the process of requesting other Colleges to consider a transfer (as set out in Section 2.1 above). Should the Panel conclude instead that the provision of the College is appropriate and reasonable, the request to consider a transfer to another College will be refused, and the applicant will be invited to consider their offer to include membership of the allocated College. There is no further right of review for this decision (see Section 4.5).

4.5 Right of Review - Postgraduate Admissions

- 4.5.1 In transfer cases occurring under Sections 4.3 or 4.4, the Panel effectively acts as the Independent Reviewer. If the Panel rejects the applicant's case (and therefore concurs with the College that membership is appropriate and manageable), this decision is final. (For clarity, the Independent Review process set out in Appendix A does not apply in these circumstances). In such circumstances, a letter will be issued by the Applicant's allocated College alongside the Panel's decision, confirming that the transfer request process has been exhausted.
- 4.5.2 Should an applicant consider the Panel's decision unsatisfactory, they would have no right of redress to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator, since complaints relating to admissions are outside its remit.

5 Constitution of the College Transfer Request Panel

- 5.1 The Panel will comprise a Chair and at least two further members appointed by the Senior Tutors' Committee. Members of the Panel will be active or former Senior Tutors and/or members of the STC Secretariat. In cases where a Panel member may be conflicted (e.g. they have prior knowledge of the student/applicant or are from the originating College), they will be expected to declare an interest and recuse themselves from the process.
- 5.2 Where deemed necessary, the Chair of the Panel reserves the right to seek specialist advice and input on cases from individuals across the Collegiate University. This includes, but is not limited to, the Head of the Accessibility & Disability Resource Centre, the Head of the University Counselling Service, the Head of the Office of Student Conduct, Complaints and Appeals, the Head of Education Services, the Secretary to the Postgraduate Committee, the Head of the Graduate Admissions Office, the Secretary to the Exams, Access and Mitigation Committee, or the Head of the OIS.

6 Annual reporting

- 6.1 An annual report will be made to the Senior Tutors' Committee by the Panel on (a) the number and distribution by College of requests for transfer received, declined and approved by the Panel, (b) the number of transfers accepted by Colleges, and (c) cases referred to an Independent Reviewer; the report will also detail any informal transfers agreed, completed and reported to OIS without invoking these procedures.

Appendix A: Mid-Course College Transfer Review Procedure

1. Where the Panel determines that a student seeking a mid-course transfer does not have grounds for a transfer of College, the student can ask for this decision to be reconsidered by an Independent Reviewer on one or more of the following grounds:
 - a) that there were procedural irregularities in the decision-making process that were material to the decision reached; or
 - b) that the decision reached was unreasonable or perverse, in that no reasonable person or body could have reached the decision on the basis of the available evidence; or
 - c) that there is new evidence, directly relevant to the request, which for good reason was not and could not have been provided to the Panel at the time of the first request.
2. The student must request a review within 28 days of receiving notification from their College that the Panel has rejected their case.
3. The Chair or a Secretary of the STC, (who has not been a member of the Panel), will appoint as an Independent Reviewer a senior member of the University outside the College and Faculty/Department of the student and Panel members with no previous knowledge of the request. The Chair or Secretary of the STC will inform the original College of the Independent Reviewer's identity, and the College in turn will notify the student. If the student has reason to believe that the Independent Reviewer is conflicted, the student should inform the person who appointed the Independent Reviewer as quickly as possible, stating their reasons. This person will consider the potential conflict and may appoint a new Independent Reviewer if they deem it appropriate.
4. The Independent Reviewer shall endeavour to consider a case and to provide a response within two weeks. Where it is not possible to complete the review within this timeframe, the Independent Reviewer will alert all relevant parties and advise on the likely timescale for a response.
5. The Independent Reviewer will consider the request and evidence provided by the student, the material considered by the Panel, the Panel's decision and the reasons for the decision. Following consideration of the relevant information, the Independent Reviewer will take one of the following actions:
 - a) reject the request as it does not meet the grounds for a review of the Panel's decision; or
 - b) uphold the request and ask for a new Panel to be convened to consider the student's transfer request in accordance with the process outlined above.
6. The Independent Reviewer will give reasons for their decision, and these will be communicated by OIS to the student's original College within five working days of the decision being made. The student's original College will be responsible for relaying this decision to the student. The decision made by the Independent Reviewer is final and therefore, where the request is rejected, a Completion of Procedures letter will be issued by the Student's College alongside the decision.
7. In undertaking the review, the Independent Reviewer acts as a sufficiently neutral party to allow for procedural fairness. However, as the policy falls outwith the remit of the University of Cambridge, it should be noted that the decision of the Independent Reviewer does not represent a University decision.