INTERMISSION (UNDERGRADUATES): COLLEGE GUIDANCE NOTES FOR TUTORS

These guidance notes should be read in conjunction with:

- The University Statutes and Ordinances, Chapter III: Examinations Allowances to Candidates for Examinations: http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/so/2015/chapter03-section2.html and
- The Examinations Access and Mitigation Committee's Notes for Guidance for Staff and Students:
- https://www.student-registry.admin.cam.ac.uk/about-us/EAMC.
- The College's notes on intermission for undergraduate students

Intermission is the term used to describe the process whereby a student can take a break from their studies and 'disregard' any terms in which they are unable to properly engage with their studies due to serious, unforeseen circumstances. 'Leave to intermit' is therefore an allowance made by the University to permit a student to 'remain in standing' during a period of absence, return to their studies and be permitted to take an examination in a subsequent year of study which they would not otherwise have been eligible to take.

The grounds for intermission are usually very serious, and permission to intermit is granted on the basis that the student is facing grave circumstances that make it impossible for them to continue with their studies without the time away. These are such problems as a chronic or acute illness, serious disability-related issues, bereavement or other grave cause. The purpose of intermission is to allow the student the necessary time and distance away from College and their studies to seek any necessary support, recuperate (in the case of ill health) or overcome any difficulties resulting from grave circumstances and to alleviate any academic disadvantage caused to the student as a result of their circumstances.

For undergraduates, intermission is managed by the Examination Access and Mitigation Committee (EAMC), which is formally a sub-committee of the General Board's Education Committee. The EAMC also deals with requests on behalf of students on the following postgraduate courses: EMBA; LLM; MASt; MBA; MCL; MEng; MFin; MMath; MMus; MSci and PGCE but this guidance is only intended to apply to undergraduate students.

The following principles should guide the College process:

1. Referral to the guidance

Students should be referred to the following guidance:

- a) EAMC Notes for Guidance for Staff and Student<u>http://www.student-registry.admin.cam.ac.uk/about-us/EAMC</u>.
- b) College guidance on intermission for students
- c) CUSU guidance on intermission: http://www.disabled.cusu.cam.ac.uk/intermission/

2. Implications of intermitting before or when the decision is made

Students should receive clear advice regarding the implications of intermitting before or when the decision to intermit is made. This might include issues such as: changes in course availability; whether work on a dissertation or project can be carried forward; financial issues and fee implications (including the effect of any previous false starts); accommodation; visa implications for overseas students. It should also be made clear that the full implications may not be known at the time of intermission (e.g. course changes), particularly if the intermission continues for more than

one year: the College should keep students informed of any new developments whilst they are intermitting.

It is possible that a student may be in a state of some considerable distress at the point at which intermission is discussed and it is therefore recommended that any potential implications of intermission be set down in writing, for the student to refer back to if necessary.

3. Clear written agreement on how intermission will work

During intermission, students will remain free to visit the city of Cambridge and to meet up with their College/University friends if they mutually wish to do so. However, intermission is intended to relieve them of any academic disadvantage, rather than offering an opportunity to gain an academic advantage, and is granted on the basis that the student is unable to study. As such, in all but very exceptional cases, permission to intermit will require students to leave their College residence. Furthermore, students will not be permitted to use/access the College's or the University's facilities/premises, even for social visits or events, during their break from study without prior permission from their College.

A discussion should therefore take place with the student, either prior to intermission or whilst they are away, to agree any social arrangements for returning to College or University premises and the frequency with which this might be possible. The impact of this to the student, their friends and the College/University community as a whole should be taken in to consideration.

Exceptions to bear in mind:

- That students can access the Students' Unions' Advice Service and the Disability Resource Centre at any point during intermission.
- If a student is required to undertake an academic assessment in order to meet a condition for return, at the College's discretion, they may be offered access to relevant University and College premises/facilities such as accommodation and libraries for a limited period of time to help them to prepare appropriately.
- There may be very exceptional circumstances in which it is permissible for a student to return to or to remain in College accommodation during a period for which they are permitted to be out of residence (for example, if they are receiving specialist medical treatment in Cambridge which would be sacrificed if they were to return to their permanent home address, or if they don't have a permanent address beyond their College accommodation). Council Tax liability implications may arise should this be permitted.

Whilst intermitting, students will not normally be permitted to formally represent either their College or the University in any way, for example in sports competitions.

Consideration should be given to whether or not a student will be asked to leave College before formal permission is sought from the Examination Access and Mitigation Committee. If a case is not clear-cut, informal advice can be sought from the Secretary to this Committee prior to permission being granted. It is also worth being aware that if an application is rejected by the Committee and the student is dissatisfied with the decision reached, they can request a review of that decision. Further details are available on the Student Complaints website: https://www.studentcomplaints.admin.cam.ac.uk/reviews-decisions-university-bodies.

Students studying on a Tier 4 visa would normally have their visa curtailed to 60 days during intermission and would be required to leave the UK within this period.

Students sometimes report feeling very alone and isolated during a period of intermission and this may exacerbate concerns about returning to study, when the time comes. These students may welcome occasional contact from their Tutor whilst they are intermitting in these circumstances. Equally, some students feel they need complete space from their studies and College and contact from a Tutor may be counterproductive in such circumstances. It is therefore recommended that a discussion is held with the student prior to intermission (wherever possible) to agree how best the Tutor and student should stay in touch and at what frequency. Tutors will need to exercise discretion and judgment to determine what is realistic given other work commitments and this discussion may present an opportunity to manage a student's expectations regarding contact with their College. Students may also wish to discuss access to the College Nurse or College Counsellor (if your College has them) during intermission.

As above, it is helpful for students to receive the details of arrangements in writing to allow them to refer back, as necessary.

4. Clear written conditions for return from intermission

If the student is intermitting on medical grounds, the Examination Access and Mitigation Committee will need to see medical evidence both in support of an application to intermit and further evidence to support an application to return to study. The Senior Tutors' Student Finance and Welfare Committee has developed some template letters which can be used if the College is seeking this evidence on behalf of the student (see APPENDIX 1). Students will need to provide their written consent for the College to do so.

The College may also deem it necessary to impose conditions which must be met before a student returns from intermission. Depending on the reason for intermitting, such conditions might include sitting a formal assessment, agreeing to a fitness to study plan, providing evidence that financial difficulties have been fully resolved or providing evidence of engagement with continuing psychological support. There should be co-ordination between the College and the Examination Access and Mitigation Committee at the point of application to ensure that any College conditions for return are taken into account in the Committee's decisions. If the student has concerns about any of the conditions which are being imposed, they should approach their Tutor or Senior Tutor, or if they feel they need impartial support/mediation they can also speak to the Students' Unions' Advice Service.

Where College-imposed or Examination Access and Mitigation Committee-imposed conditions must be satisfied before resumption of study is possible, these should be clearly and unambiguously stated to the student, along with relevant deadlines, in writing, at the point that intermission is approved. A clear statement of what facilities (if any) and support will be made available to the student to meet any such conditions should be given in advance (see Section 7). The College should also inform students if it wishes to reserve the right to seek an independent assessment of a student's fitness to return to study. A template letter for Tutors to use when writing to the student can be found in APPENDIX 2.

5. Before the student leaves

It is deemed good practice for the College to make the student fully aware of all the documentation being submitted to the Examination Access and Mitigation Committee on the student's behalf. Therefore, where possible, it is recommended that a meeting should be held with the student before they leave to go over any relevant documentation. This might include relevant sections from the Committee's notes for guidance, the College's guidance notes for undergraduate students, the College's statement to the Committee, and the student declaration form. After this meeting (or

where a meeting is not possible), it is recommended that the student should be contacted in writing with links to reminders and resources. These might include:

- A link to the University's student wellbeing pages: www.cambridgestudents.cam.ac.uk/welfare-and-wellbeing
- A link to the Facebook support group for intermitting students, which is maintained by CUSU: www.facebook.com/groups/1547925268789968
- A link to the Students' Unions' Advice Service, which provides free confidential, impartial, and non-directive advice to Cambridge students: <u>www.studentadvice.cam.ac.uk</u>
- (if applicable) A link to the Disability Resource Centre , if the student is intermitting as a result of a newly diagnosed medical condition or disability to ensure that support and funding is put in place before they resume study <u>www.disability.admin.cam.ac.uk</u>
- A link to the guidance on intermission written by CUSU: <u>http://www.disabled.cusu.cam.ac.uk/intermission/</u>
- Clarification about when the College's room balloting will take place, and that if the student deems themselves to have particular access requirements, how to go about reporting these to the College's accommodation office. (It is noted that the relevance of this will depend on the time of year the student is anticipated to return to study. Students likely to return after the start of Michaelmas Term should be advised of the College's policy regarding accommodation arrangements in such circumstances).
- A link to the University's International Student Office if the student is on a Tier 4 visa and will need advice on making a new visa application prior to returning to study: <u>https://www.iso.admin.cam.ac.uk/</u>
- If the student was receiving support from the University Counselling Service prior to intermission, encourage the student to speak to the UCS if they need help sourcing access to counselling support outside the UCS whilst intermitting.

Once intermission has been approved, administrative matters also need to be attended to, including:

- Updating the student's CamSIS record and informing the Student Registry.
- Withdrawing the student from any examinations.
- Advising the student's DoS, Supervisors, College welfare staff, Porters and any other College staff who need to know that the student is intermitting (information about the student's circumstances should only be shared with the student's consent).
- Advising the student's Faculty/Department.
- Advising the DRC/UCS if the student's is receiving human support such as a mentor, study skills tutor or note-taker from the DRC, or mental health advice from the UCS.
- Issuing a Change of Circumstances to the student's funding body if the student is in receipt of a loan/DSA.
- It is recommended that the Tutorial Office be responsible for coordinating the confirmation of the student's period of intermission to **all** the relevant parties, including reminding the student's DoS of their responsibility to notify the Supervisor(s) as required.

6. Whilst the student is intermitting

It is recommended that you:

- Make contact with the student at the frequency agreed with them prior to leaving.
- If the student is intermitting for reasons of ill health, a medical condition or disability-related issues, signposting the student to the Disability Resource Centre well in advance of their return would be beneficial to ensure that the student will have support in place in time for their return to study. It is also advisable for you to speak to the DRC to discuss support for the student's return in parallel.

- Remind the student of any conditions to return:
 - This might include providing more details of any academic assessment(s) they may need to take and referral on to their DoS for further guidance. The student may also need to provide medical evidence confirming their fitness to return to study. It is recommended that students should be reminded of the need to provide this at least 6 weeks before the deadline to allow time for an appointment to be made and the medical professional to provide a letter. A good rule of thumb would be to remind the student at the division of the term preceding the term in which they are expected to return. (If returning in Michaelmas) remind the student when the College room ballot will take place, and that if they deem themselves to have particular access requirements, how to go about reporting these to the College's discretion how preferences of a student returning from intermission should be considered but it is helpful for intermitting students to be made aware of the College's policy on such matters.
- Inform the student of the workshops run by the University Counselling Service for intermission returners: <u>http://www.counselling.cam.ac.uk/studentcouns/studentgroups</u>.
- Refer Tier 4 students to the International Student Team for guidance on obtaining their new visa to ensure they are ready to apply as soon as a return to study has been approved.
- Provide links to support mechanisms as detailed in section 5.
- Colleges might decide that they wish to meet the student face-to-face before approving a return from intermission and, where this is expected, the student should be given advance warning.

If it is decided that the student is not yet fit to return to study, a further application can be made to the Examination Access and Mitigation Committee for the extension of intermission. Further evidence to support an extension will be required.

7. Before the student returns from intermission

Where students are required to sit a formal assessment before returning from intermission, the following good practice principles are strongly encouraged:

- The reason for the test should be a pedagogical one and the student should be informed of the purpose of the test and the required standard of performance well in advance.
- Careful consideration should be given to the required standard of performance in any assessment; it is recommended that students should not be required to perform at a higher standard than the University would normally require for progression on the course, had the student not intermitted.
- Steps should be taken to ensure that the student is properly supported in being able to undertake the test. Consideration should be given to: allowing the student to return to residence for a limited period of time, and be accommodated within College in advance of the test; ensuring necessary access to appropriate library and academic facilities and consideration as to whether the offer of a supervision and/or access to the student's DoS would be appropriate in helping them to prepare.
- If the student has a disability or long term medical condition, they may be eligible for support from the DRC, including time with a specialist study skills tutor. Students should be encouraged to make contact with the DRC well in advance of their assessment.
- Steps should be taken to ensure that any reasonable adjustments the student requires in an examination are honoured for the assessment process (bearing in mind the necessary lead time to ensure these are in place). If adjustments are disability-related, consultation with the DRC in advance is advisable.
- For overseas students, the International Student Team should be contacted to discuss the visa requirements to enable the student to return to the UK to undertake the test.

- Where a student hopes to change Tripos on returning from intermission, the College's assessment process for considering this change should not differ from the process used to assess continuing students wishing to make the same change.
- That the results of any academic test never be used as the sole determinant of the student's suitability to return to study.

It is worth noting that assessments undertaken on returning from intermission are not subject to the University's strict standards of examining, are not anonymous and not taken within the context of a wider cohort. Due consideration should be given to these factors in the interpretation of the results. It is thus not considered best practice to attribute a class to such work, nor to imply to the student that it would have obtained a particular mark in their Tripos.

8. On return from intermission

It is recommended that all students returning from intermission meet with their Tutor as soon as they return to study. This meeting can be informal but should aim to:

- welcome the student back to College
- ensure that any new requirements are identified to enable support mechanisms to be put in place to assist the student in making a smooth transition back to study, including, if applicable, any disability-related support
- bring the student up to date on any relevant changes that have occurred within College during the period of intermission
- agree with the student what information regarding their circumstances will be shared with the student's DoS, supervisors and Faculty/Department and who will share it
- for any student returning into their first year, clarify the student's preferences regarding; participating in college-run Freshers' events; attending functions such as the matriculation dinner; whether they wish to be allocated a college or subject 'parent' (where applicable).

It is also helpful for the JCR Welfare Officers to be informed of the student's return from intermission, with the student's consent.

If the student's reason for intermission was health or disability-related, it may also be helpful to arrange a meeting between the student and the College Nurse.

Ideally, administrative matters should be attended to before the student returns. These might include:

- Ensuring the student is included in the correct email circulation lists
- Updating the student's CamSIS record and informing the Student Registry
- Reinstating the student to their examinations
- Advising the student's DoS, Supervisor, College welfare staff, Porters and any other College staff that need to know the student is returning
- Advising the student's Faculty/Department
- Advising the DRC if the student is eligible for human support
- Issuing a Change of Circumstances to the student's funding body if they are in receipt of a loan/DSA.

Students returning from intermission have reported that they find it beneficial to regularly check in with their Tutor to discuss how they are settling back in to study and College life. It is therefore

recommended that Tutors either arrange to meet with the returning student to discuss this specifically, or raise the matter at their regular tutorial meetings with the student.

A template intermission checklist for Colleges is provided in APPENDIX 3.

APPENDIX 1 Template letters for Tutors to GP

Template letter: for Intermission

Dear Dr XXX

Medical basis for an application to intermit studies - Doctor's certificate

The student XXX at XXX College wishes to intermit their studies because of illness or reasons related to their disability/medical condition/illness.

In order to do this, they need medical evidence for the University's Examination Access and Mitigation Committee, which has medically qualified members to review the evidence and consider the student's application. (Only the Committee's medical advisors see this evidence.)

The student has given consent to the relevant medical information being provided to the University's Examination Access and Mitigation Committee and I attach a signed form from the student confirming this.

Please could you answer the questions below to help the University decide if it is appropriate for this student to be given permission to intermit their studies?

- 1. What is the nature of the medical condition/disability, and what are the medical reason(s) requiring that the student intermit their studies?
- 2. What was the date on which you first saw the student for this condition?
- 3. What treatment has the student been receiving for this condition?
- 4. Please give details of any further treatment or support the student may need before being able to resume their studies.
- 5. What is the prognosis for this condition and when is it likely that the student will be fit to resume?

Thank you for your help, which is very important in ensuring students can appropriately take time away from studies due to illness and subsequently go on to complete their studies successfully.

Yours sincerely,

XXX Tutor College XXX Template letter: for return into residence

Dear Dr XXX

Medical evidence for an application to return into University residence - Doctor's certificate

The student XXX at XXX College wishes to return to their studies following a period of intermission because of illness/disability related reasons. In order to do this they need medical evidence that they are fit to do so for the University's Examination Access and Mitigation Committee, which has medically qualified members to review this and consider the student's application. (Only the Committee's medical advisors see this evidence.)

The student has given consent to the relevant medical information being provided to the University's Examination Access and Mitigation Committee and I attach a signed form from the student confirming this.

Please could you answer the questions below to help the University decide if it is appropriate for this student to resume study?

- 1. What was the original diagnosis, which caused the student to intermit?
- 2. Did you personally make the original diagnosis?
- 3. What treatment was given and has the student fully recovered or is ongoing treatment or support required?
- 4. In your opinion is the student fit to return to University Study? Is that fitness to return conditional on further support?
- 5. Is the condition likely to affect their future examination preparation or performance? In the case of mental health disorders, full details of any subsequent supervision or monitoring should be given.
- 6. Please indicate whether a referral to the University's Disability Resource Centre for specialist support is required.

Thank you for your help, which is very important in ensuring students can go on to complete their studies successfully.

Yours sincerely,

XXX Tutor College XXX

APPENDIX 2 Template letter for Tutors to students

Tutors are responsible for forwarding the letter of approval from the University's Examination Access and Mitigation Committee to intermitting students. This letter will set out any University-imposed conditions for return. In consultation with the nurse and the Senior Tutor, Tutors may wish to add further conditions imposed by the College.

Each case will be individual and a letter will need to be tailored to each student's needs and circumstances. However, this template is designed to form the basis of a personalised letter which can be adapted, as required.

Dear XXX

I'm pleased to tell you that the University's Examination Access and Mitigation Committee has approved your request for intermission. I'm enclosing their letter, which you should read carefully.

The University's Examination Access and Mitigation Committee considers each case very thoroughly, and it has laid down general guidelines that intermitting students should follow. The Committee has agreed to your request for intermission to enable you to overcome the difficulty/ties which necessitated your application to intermit. It is therefore important that you focus on your wellbeing and do not use this time for additional study.

Acting on behalf of the University, the College is obliged to make sure that its intermitting students observe the University's rules. Intermission is intended to relieve you of any academic disadvantage, rather than offering an opportunity for you to gain an academic advantage, and is granted on the basis that you are unable to study. As such, permission to intermit will require you to leave your College residence. Furthermore, you will not be permitted to use/access the College's or the University's facilities/premises, even for social visits or events, during your break from study without prior permission from XXX [relevant person within College]. For the sake of clarity, I should emphasise that you are, of course, free to visit the city of Cambridge whilst intermitting and to meet with your friends outside of University/College premises without seeking College permission.

You may also access the Students' Unions' Advice Service while intermitting; if you wish to seek independent advice on any aspect of your intermission or return to study (http://www.studentadvice.cam.ac.uk/).

The Disability Resource Centre is also accessible to intermitting students (www.disability.admin.cam.ac.uk).

In addition to general guidelines, the Applications Committee lists some specific conditions for each student. As you will see from your letter, they will require XXX.

[for students intermitting for medical reasons]

In particular, please note that the Applications Committee will require medical evidence of your fitness to resume study before you can return. Based on your anticipated return date of XXX, we will need to receive this evidence by 10 August XXX (for Michaelmas return) / 10 November XXX (for Lent return) / 10 March XXX (for Easter return). We know from experience that obtaining this evidence can take some time and so we would encourage you to initiate a discussion with your medical practitioner at the beginning of July (for Michaelmas return)/October (for Lent return)/February (for Easter return). Please see APPENDIX 2 of the enclosed guidance for more details regarding medical

evidence. [The College also reserves the right to seek an independent assessment of your fitness to resume study]

The College has also considered your situation very carefully. We want to give you the best possible support when you come back, and so we need to be sure that you are ready to return. For this reason, we would be grateful if you could let us know if there is any support we can provide that might be helpful. You don't have to let us know straightaway, but do bear in mind that we might not be able to provide it immediately if you don't tell us in advance.

[for students with a newly diagnosed disability/medical condition]

As the reason for your intermission results in full or in part from a recent diagnosis of a disability/medical condition, we strongly encourage you to make contact with the University Disability Resource Centre in advance of your return to study to ensure that the DRC can begin the process of determining any study support requirements you may have. (http://www.disability.admin.cam.ac.uk/)

Whilst you are away, you may also wish to browse the following resources:

- www.cambridgestudents.cam.ac.uk/welfare-and-wellbeing
- <u>www.facebook.com/groups/1547925268789968</u> (the Facebook support group for intermitting students, which is maintained by CUSU).
- http://www.disabled.cusu.cam.ac.uk/intermission/

[insert any Tier 4 Visa implications/arrangements for leaving or returning to study following consultation with the International Student Team].

[insert College room balloting information if applicable].

Before you return, we would also like you to XXX [insert College's conditions for return].

[for students completing academic assessment]

The reason we are asking you to complete an academic assessment is XXX. The assessment will involve XXX. In order to demonstrate that you are ready to return, you will need to achieve XXX in the assessment. We appreciate that taking an assessment following a period of time away from College can feel daunting and so we therefore propose that you are offered the following support: XXX [accommodation/access to the library/session with supervisor or DoS etc.] in advance of your return and we can discuss this in more detail nearer the time.

If you are usually eligible for reasonable adjustments when sitting an exam, we will honour those arrangements in the assessment. *[for students with disability or medical condition]* Students with a disability or medical condition may also be eligible for additional support from the DRC and so I would urge you to contact them well in advance of your return to check your eligibility.

When you return, we would strongly encourage you to attend the sessions for returning students provided by the University Counselling Service. I'll give you more information about them when you return.

In the meantime, concentrate on looking after yourself /XXX. [if the student wants to be contacted whilst they are intermitting] As agreed, I will keep in touch you by email/phone/letter [state frequency]. You can also get in touch with me by contacting XXX. [include information about what contact with the College Nurse / Counsellor is permitted during intermission].

If your needs change at any point, or you think of ways that we could better support you, please do not hesitate to let me know. I look forward to seeing you when you're back, and of course I'll be happy to answer any questions you might have in the meantime.

Best wishes, NNN Enclosures: College Guidance Notes on Intermission for Undergraduate Students

APPENDIX 2 Intermission checklist Applying to intermit

Student N	Name:		
Tutor:			
DoS:			
Tripos:			
	Student has confirmed they have read the relevant Examination Access and Mitigation Committee guidance notes		
	Student has confirmed they have read the relevant College Guidance notes		
	 Student has met with Tutor and DoS and has understood the implications of intermission, including (where applicable): Academic implications Financial implications Visa implications Accommodation/Residence implications 		
	Student has provided appropriate evidence		
	Application form has been completed by Tutor		
	Statement on behalf of College has been written and student has been given a copy		
	Data sharing declaration form has been signed by student (if applicable)		
	Agreement has been reached regarding arrangements for social visits to College and/or University premises		
	Agreement has been reached about method and frequency by which Tutor will keep in contact with the student whilst they are away, and whether the student may contact the College Nurse/Counsellor.		
Date of application to EAMC:		Click here to enter text.	
Date EAMC and College letters sent to student confirming permission granted, conditions, implications and resources available:		Click here to enter text.	
Date student is expected to return:		Click here to enter text.	
Date letter to be sent reminding student of return arrangements and Click here to enter text. actions required in order to resume study, with deadlines:		Click here to enter text.	
	Student's CamSIS record updated and SR informed		
	Student withdrawn from exams		
	College and Departmental staff, DRC/UCS/International Student Team (if applicable) notified of student's intermission by the Tutorial Office		
	CoC form issued to SLC (if applicable)		

Returning from intermission

	Reminder letter sent		
	Student has provided evidence supporting fitness to return (if applicable)		
	Application to EAMC made		
	Permission granted		
	Student notified		
	Arrangements for academic assessment made, including arrangements (if applicable)	reasonable adjustments and visa	
Confirme	d date of return:	Click here to enter text.	
	Tier 4 visa in place for return (if applicable)		
	Welcome back meeting arranged with Tutor on return		
	Check in meeting with Tutor arranged to assess how the student is settling back in		
	Student's CamSIS record updated and SR informed		
	Student reinstated to exams		
	College staff, Departmental staff, DRC (if applicable), UCS (if applicable) and JCR Welfare Officers notified of student's return (with student's consent about what is shared by whom and to whom) – Tutorial Office to coordinate.		
	CoC form issued to SLC (if applicable)		
	Student added to correct year email lists		