

Guidance for University and college staff on submitting dispensations to Education Committee

1. What are dispensations?

1.1 Dispensations are requests to Education Committee for the normal limits and rules set out in the [Examination Regulations](#) to be set aside for individual students, generally due to extenuating circumstances.

1.2 Many dispensation applications are requests for a student's assessment to be varied in some way, generally due to disability or ill health. Education Committee can also grant, in exceptional circumstances, extensions to a student's time on their course/programme.

1.3 The types of dispensations which Education Committee has the power to grant are listed in [Annex A](#).

2. How do I submit a dispensation request?

2.1 Please e-mail dispensation requests to edcapplications@admin.ox.ac.uk. Please do not send any correspondence directly to individual officers in Education Policy Support. Applications should be made using the application form which is provided as a Word document at <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/edc/casemanagement/dispensations/>.

2.2 Please encrypt any documents which you attach as supporting information (advice on this is available at <https://www.infosec.ox.ac.uk/stay-safe-on-email>).

2.3 Please complete a separate application form for each student for whom you are requesting dispensation. We would be grateful if you could send each application form in a separate email.

2.4 Dispensation requests for undergraduate students should be submitted by their college. Dispensation requests for postgraduate students should be submitted by their department/faculty (or divisional Graduate Studies Assistant), but may be submitted by the college if appropriate. Requests for non-matriculated students should be submitted by their department.

3. When should I submit a dispensation request?

3.1 Please submit dispensation requests as soon as you realise that a dispensation may be required. The nature of dispensations (often requiring changes to examination papers or to what a student is studying, or decisions as to whether a student is permitted to extend their programme) means that long-term planning is needed in most cases.

3.2 Many requests need to be submitted by the beginning of the academic year in which the relevant examination is being held (e.g. to ensure that examiners have time to set alternative papers, if required). In cases where a request is made for a student to study for e.g. a further term, please ensure that you have allowed enough time for a decision to be made before the student begins the extra period of study.

3.3 When a student suspends study, please ensure that you consider at the point of suspension whether any dispensations will be required in relation to their return to study, and

make any necessary requests as soon as possible after they have suspended. This will ensure that all decisions required are made well before they return to study.

3.4 If your request is urgent, please make this clear in your application, and explain the reasons for the urgency.

3.5 In all cases, please allow sufficient time so that if the request is not granted, there is time to make alternative arrangements for the student.

4. What information do I need to send when I submit a dispensation request?

4.1 We ask that all requests are made using the application form (available from www.admin.ox.ac.uk/edc/casemanagement/dispensations/). The application form is intended to make it easier for you to provide the information required.

4.2 The form covers:

- Student details
- Details of what is being requested, i.e. the difference between what the regulations require and what is being requested for the student
- Background information on why the dispensation is being requested
- Information on any supporting material you have submitted to accompany the form (medical evidence where the request is being made on medical grounds; GSO forms for PG students; statements from the Disability Advisory Service where relevant; any other supporting material)
- Information on how the application and supporting material will be shared, and student consent to disclosure within those limits
- Your details, information on whether the college or department/faculty (whichever is making the request) supports the application, and any other comments which the college or department/faculty wishes to make.

4.3 The amount of detail which it is appropriate to provide will vary depending on the complexity of the request, and in some cases, how much information is provided in supporting material such as GSO forms. If the request follows on from or is related to permissions granted or rejected by other bodies, e.g. Proctors, divisional board, please provide information on those permissions/rejections, e.g. dates of extensions.

4.4 For example, when providing information on papers which a student needs to sit under 'old regulations', the 'Procedure for sitting examinations under old regulations' at www.admin.ox.ac.uk/edc/casemanagement/dispensations/ lists the brief details which are required. If on the other hand you are making an application for a major adjustment to assessment on the grounds of disability, e.g. a request to spread one year of teaching and assessment over two years, you will need to provide a detailed proposal for how this would be done.

4.5 Please ensure that the consent to share box has been ticked. If a student does not consent to share information or consent has not been discussed with the student, please state this in the further comments box.

5. What happens after I have submitted a dispensation request?

5.1 Education Policy Support endeavours to acknowledge requests within two working days. Depending on the complexity of the request, the officer within Education Policy Support who is dealing with the application may request further information. Views will be sought from the student's department/faculty (in the case of applications submitted by colleges) or college (in the case of applications submitted by departments/faculties; although this is not necessary where the college has already signed a GSO form for a postgraduate application).

5.2 Some applications are dealt with by officers in Education Policy Support, while more complex cases are referred to the Chair of Education Committee (the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education)) or their delegate, to make a decision on the committee's behalf.

6. When will I receive a decision on a dispensation request?

6.1 Please allow a minimum of two weeks for your dispensation request to be considered. Major and/or more complex dispensation requests will take longer to resolve, especially if more information is requested from the college or department/faculty.

6.2 As indicated above, if you wish to request that your application is considered urgently, please make this clear when submitting the request.

7. Appeals against Education Committee decisions on dispensation requests

7.1 A student who is dissatisfied with a decision made on behalf of Education Committee on their dispensation request may appeal against it.

7.2 There is no application form for these appeals. Appeals must be made in writing within 14 days of the decision and sent to edcapplications@admin.ox.ac.uk by the student or by their college/department on their behalf. Appeals will be considered by two members of Education Committee with no previous connection with the case.

8. Appeals to Education Committee against decisions of the Proctors

8.1 Under Part 18.1 of the Regulations for the Conduct of University Examinations, a student or their college may appeal to Education Committee against certain decisions of the Proctors if they are dissatisfied with the outcome. Only appeals relating to the following can be considered:

- Special arrangements as a result of religious festivals and holidays coinciding with exams;
- Special arrangements for candidates with special examination needs;
- Decisions not to forward a mitigating circumstances notice to examiners;
- Decisions relating to late submission, non-submission, non-appearance, and withdrawal from examinations;

- Decisions relating to a student wishing to withdraw an already submitted piece of work and substituting a revised version.

8.2 There is no application form for these appeals. Appeals must be made in writing within 14 days of the Proctors' decision and sent to edcapplications@admin.ox.ac.uk by the student or by their college/department on their behalf. They should include a copy of the Proctors' decision. Appeals will be considered by the Chair or another member of Education Committee.

9. Who do I contact with queries?

9.1 If you have any queries with regards to dispensations from the examination regulations, or are not sure whether a dispensation is required for a particular student, please e-mail edcapplications@admin.ox.ac.uk with details.

9.2 You will need to contact other areas of the University with regards to some requests for students:

Information about mitigating circumstances requests, migration and residence applications, student complaints and academic appeals, and reporting misconduct is available on the Proctors' Office website at www.proctors.ox.ac.uk. Forms used for requests to the Proctors are available at www.proctors.ox.ac.uk/forms.

Requests for alternative arrangements for examinations and submission of mitigating circumstances notices to examiners are made via the Examinations and Assessments team. Information is available in the Examinations and Assessments Staff Handbook at <https://examshandbook.admin.ox.ac.uk/home>.

Annex A

Types of dispensation

1. Carry forward of marks

Under [Part 14 of the Regulations for the Conduct of University Examinations](#), candidates who suspend their studies should have all assessments which were completed before the start of the suspension 'carried forward' to their return to studies within certain limits. As the 'carrying forward' of assessment is not an automated process, contact Education Policy Support with the details of candidates who require assessments to be 'carried forward' to ensure that the candidate's student record accurately reflects completed assessment.

Requests to 'carry forward' work outside the limits and requests *not* to repeat assessment in a repeated term may be made using the dispensation process. Such requests will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

2. Overstanding for honours

Requests for undergraduate students to be eligible for a classified honours degree, despite having passed the maximum time allowed to be considered for honours under regulation 4.11 in the [General Regulations for the First and Second Public Examination](#). Students will be overstanding if they have suspended for more than six terms since matriculation.

3. Previous syllabus ('old regulations')

Requests for taught course students to sit papers which reflect what they were taught, when the content of a course has changed between the term when a student was taught and the term in which they take the examination, due to suspension. See 'Procedure for sitting examinations under old regulations' at www.admin.ox.ac.uk/edc/casemanagement/dispensations/.

4. Illegal combination of examination papers

Requests for taught course students to take a combination of examination papers not permitted in the special regulations for their course, generally because a mistake has been made and a student has already studied for an incorrect combination of papers.

5. Major adjustments to assessment

Requests for adjustments to assessment for taught courses due to disability which go beyond the alternative arrangements for examinations which can be granted by the Proctors, i.e. changes to the format or timing of the assessment. This includes spreading teaching and assessment for a course over a longer period than usual, or exceptionally replacing some written examination papers with other forms of assessment (such as extended essays or take-home papers).

Guidance on major adjustments to examinations and assessment is provided in Annex A of the [Policy and guidance for examiners and others involved in University examinations](#). Annex B on Competence standards is also relevant.

6. Resits

Requests for exceptional resit opportunities, including exceptional third attempts at the First Public Examination under regulation 3.16 (2) in the [General Regulations for the First and Second Public Examination](#). Requests to resit outside the timeframes permitted in either general or special regulations.

7. Suspension

For postgraduate students and non-matriculated undergraduate students only, requests for exceptional extra terms of suspension beyond those which can be approved by the board (e.g. more than six terms for a DPhil student).

8. Reinstatement

For postgraduate students only, requests for reinstatement to the register where the student has already used up all the time they are permitted to spend on the register (e.g. 18 terms for a DPhil student). Education Committee can grant permission for reinstatement for one term for the purposes of submission.

9. Part-time study

For postgraduate research students only, requests to study part-time (where a programme is not already offered on a part-time basis), generally for reasons related to disability, employment or childcare. Requests from taught course students who need to study at a slower pace are considered as major adjustments to assessment due to disability (no. 5 above).

10. Antedated admission

Requests for admission to be antedated (to the time they began their DPhil programme at another university) for DPhil students transferring to Oxford with their supervisor. Requests may also be made for transfer of status to be waived for such students, if evidence is provided that they completed an equivalent assessment at their former university.

11. Extension of Probationer Research Student status

Requests for deferral of transfer of status/ extension of PRS status beyond the number of terms which the board can allow, i.e. beyond the 6th term for the first attempt and beyond an additional term for a second attempt.

12. Extension to deadline for Confirmation of Status

Requests for deferral of confirmation of status beyond the three terms which the board can allow.

13. Extension of student status

For postgraduate students only, requests for extension of student status beyond the number of terms' extension which can be granted by the board, e.g. more than six terms' extension for a DPhil student. Requests regarding undergraduate students who need to take longer to complete their course are considered as major adjustments to assessment due to disability (no. 5 above) and applications to be eligible for a classified honours degree despite being overstanding for honours (no. 2 above).

14. Matriculation

Requests for deferral of matriculation beyond the student's third term of study, generally for part-time students who spend limited time in Oxford.

15. Applications relating to Recognized or Visiting student status

Requests for extensions to Recognized or Visiting student status beyond the number of terms permitted in the regulations. Requests to hold Visiting or Recognized Student status despite previously matriculating.

16. Other dispensations

Any other dispensation from the [Examination Regulations](#). Usually requests for dispensation from specific requirements in the special regulations for an examination (examples include dispensation from the requirement that certain parts of an examination are taken in consecutive years, or requests to submit work according to a different schedule than that set out in the regulations).