

Guidance for medical practitioners on the use of medical certificates

Introduction

This guidance aims to support medical practitioners who are asked to provide medical certificates for University of Oxford students.

- It is normally expected that medical certificates are provided by college doctors within Oxford. However, other medical practitioners will sometimes be asked to provide certificates, and this will on occasion be appropriate if a student is under the care of a specialist or based outside of Oxford. **Please note that, in the very rare cases when a non-English language medical certificate is provided, the student will be required to provide a certified translation.**
- If a charge is made by a medical practitioner for a medical certificate, students are responsible for this cost.
- We ask that medical practitioners complete the form and answer the questions as fully as possible with reference to the reason for which the medical certificate has been provided. The University of Oxford is very grateful to all medical practitioners who provide medical evidence for University students.
- Where cases of acute illness are concerned, students are advised to obtain an appointment to see a medical practitioner **or, from Trinity term 2016, a college nurse¹** as soon as possible after the onset of the illness. For longer-term conditions, medical certificates may not need to be so recent. How recent a certificate is required to be in these circumstances will depend on the reason why it has been requested, and the details of an individual case.

Disability

The medical certificate form asks medical practitioners to answer the question 'Is this student likely to be considered to have a disability as defined under the Equality Act 2010?'

To help answer this question, it is important to note that under the Equality Act 2010, a person is considered to have a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term negative effect on their ability to do normal daily activities. Long-term means that a condition has lasted or is expected to last 12 months or more; however, anyone diagnosed with HIV infection, cancer or multiple sclerosis automatically meets the disability definition from the day they are diagnosed. There are special rules about recurring or fluctuating conditions (e.g. arthritis). Further guidance is available from <https://www.gov.uk/definition-of-disability-under-equality-act-2010>.

¹ I.e. a nurse who is formally associated with the collegiate University and therefore based in Oxford.

The following table provides the reasons why University of Oxford students most commonly request medical certificates, and gives brief details on the most useful information to include on medical certificates provided for these reasons. Medical certificates may be requested for other purposes not covered in the table.

Table of common reasons for students requesting the University medical certificate

Reason for requesting medical certificate	Details of procedure	Guidance on information required on medical certificates
Factors affecting performance in an examination	<p>Students may apply for consideration by examiners of factors affecting performance in an examination for which they presented themselves, e.g. that they were unwell during an examination or in the period preceding the examination, or that the provision of alternative arrangements for their examinations did not fully mitigate the impact of their medical condition or disability.</p> <p>Applications on medical grounds must be accompanied by medical evidence.</p> <p>Please note: from Trinity term 2016 medical certificates may be submitted by college nurses, in appropriate cases of acute illness.</p>	<p>Areas of impact to consider include (but are not limited to): concentration; reading or writing speed; ability to sustain work for the duration of the examination.</p> <p>Information on when the student's condition has had the greatest impact should be explicit in relation to the timing of the examination in question, and indicate the examination(s) which have been affected. If the period affected preceded the examination, it is important to provide evidence of the duration of the condition.</p>
Alternative arrangements for examinations	<p>Students may apply for alternative examination arrangements relating to a disability or medical condition.</p> <p>Applications usually relate to long-standing conditions that will require alternative</p>	<p>Areas of impact to consider include (but are not limited to): the ability of the student to sustain work for the normal length of the examination (which may relate to concentration or reading or writing speed); the ability of the student to sit examinations using the facilities</p>

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	<p>arrangements for all the examinations that a student needs to sit, but students sometimes need to make applications at short notice due to short-term illness or injury</p> <p>Applications relating to disabilities/long-term medical conditions</p> <p>Applications must be supported by medical evidence.</p> <p>Requests for alternative arrangements for dyslexia, dyspraxia and other specific learning difficulties must be accompanied by a diagnostic report from an appropriately qualified psychologist or a specialist teacher.</p> <p>Applications relating to short-term illness or injury</p> <p>When students make applications for alternative arrangements relating to short-term illness or injury at short notice, college nurses, Senior Tutors or Deans may provide a statement to support this, if followed by a medical certificate within seven days.</p> <p>Please note: from Trinity term 2016 college nurses may issue medical certificates without the need for a follow-up doctor's certificate in certain cases</p>	<p>provided in the usual rooms used for examination sittings².</p> <p>Explicit information on how the student's disability or medical condition affects their ability to sit examinations is useful.</p> <p>The medical certificate form asks whether, in your medical view, the University should consider alternative arrangements for examinations for the student, whether alternative arrangements should be considered for all examinations during their course/programme or only for certain time periods, or whether alternative arrangements should be considered for certain types of examinations only (e.g. for timed written examinations or orals or practicals). It also allows you, if you wish, to make recommendations on alternative arrangements that the University might wish to consider. Please see Annex A of this guidance for examples of common adjustments to examination arrangements.</p> <p>Please note: from October 2014 students do not need a medical certificate to support minor adjustments and permission to take medical aids/medication into an examination. A letter from the college Senior Tutor or college nurse is sufficient.</p> <p>This would include bringing snacks, and medications including asthma inhalers, eye drops, ear plugs, nasal spray or</p>

² See Annex A for information on alternative arrangements which can be accommodated at Examination Schools/Ewert House and those which require a college sitting

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	<p>of acute illness, as follows.</p> <p>Last minute adjustments: for alternative arrangement requests made within 24 hours before the examination, for reasons of acute illness, the following evidence will be accepted:</p> <p>a) a medical certificate (or signed letter) from a college nurse (no longer requiring a follow-up certificate by a doctor);</p> <p>b) a signed letter from a Senior Tutor/Dean, provided it is followed within seven days by a letter or medical certificate from a doctor or college nurse;</p> <p>c) a medical certificate from a doctor.</p> <p>Requests for non-emergency alternative examination arrangements continue to require a doctor's medical certificate.</p>	<p>a cushion into an examination, or wearing for example a wrist splint.</p> <p>For students with Type 1 diabetes this would also include bringing blood-testing kits, glucose drinks and/or tablets, insulin with syringes.</p>
<p>Extensions to submission dates</p>	<p>Students can apply for extensions to submission dates for assessments, and medical evidence is required if this is for a medical reason.</p> <p>Please note: from Trinity term 2016 medical certificates may be submitted by college nurses, in appropriate cases of acute illness.</p>	<p>Medical certificates should evidence the reasons why the student's condition has made/will make them unable to meet the specific submission deadline. It is important to provide evidence of the duration of the condition.</p>

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Adjustments to course or assessment requirements	<p>A small number of students make applications through their college for more significant adjustments to the requirements of their course/programme, that are not covered by alternative arrangements for examinations or applications for extensions to submission dates.</p> <p>Applications are normally for students with significant disabilities or severe health conditions, and require medical evidence in support. The Disability Advisory Service is also usually involved.</p> <p>Examples of adjustments include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • significant extensions to the submission date for a thesis or dissertation • an extension to the period of time in which a taught course is normally taken • alternative methods of assessment 	<p>Medical certificates in these circumstances should demonstrate how the student's condition impacts upon their ability to complete work within the usual timescales, or how it means, for example, that they are unable to sit written examinations, even if alternative arrangements are made (details of alternative arrangements that can be accommodated are included as Annex A).</p> <p>Detailed medical evidence is generally required for these rare applications.</p>
Suspension from study	<p>Students can request medical certificates to support applications to suspend study for medical reasons.</p> <p>These applications are normally made to colleges or departments. In the case of postgraduate research degrees, these applications are often made retrospectively, following an</p>	<p>Please indicate how the medical condition is preventing the student from completing the usual workload required of them, and/or from meeting the usual academic, social, and/or behavioural requirements of a University student. It is important to provide evidence of the duration of the condition.</p> <p>It is useful if possible to provide an opinion on when a student</p>

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	illness.	may be fit to resume study. This may be before the student would normally be expected to return to study.
Applications for study-related support for disabled students	<p>Disabled students need formal evidence of their disability in order to access support from the University and external sources.</p> <p>For conditions other than specific learning difficulties, a medical certificate from a GP or Consultant is required.</p>	<p>Please include information on how long the student has had the condition/when they were diagnosed, and on what treatment/support they are currently receiving (or that is recommended).</p> <p>Areas to consider include how the student's disability impacts on their day-to-day life and ability to undertake academic work.</p>
Applications for hardship funding	Students can apply for various kinds of hardship funding based on financial hardship due to medical or disability-related reasons.	<p>Areas to consider might include: how the student's medical condition or disability means that: they are unable to study as effectively or for as long periods as the typical student; they incur extra costs; or they are unable to undertake paid work during vacations.</p> <p>If the nature of the student's condition means that they incur particularly high costs (e.g. higher than can be covered through Disabled Students' Allowance), it is helpful to mention this.</p> <p>If the medical condition has only started to affect the student recently (or there has been an unexpected increase in the severity of the condition), please make this clear.</p>

Annex A

Examples of common adjustments to examination arrangements

Some common adjustments can be accommodated at the Examination Schools or Ewert House (where University examinations are normally held); others can only be accommodated if the student sits papers separately (usually in their college).

Examples of adjustments which can be accommodated at the Examination Schools or Ewert House

- Students requiring the use of a PC/laptop
- Students requiring up to 15 minutes per hour extra time (both when handwriting and when using a PC/laptop, for writing/typing and/or resting)
- Students sitting in the main examination hall who need to be close to an exit (e.g. for visits to the toilet)
- Students requiring a computer desk chair, or to bring their own chairs
- Students requiring an adjustable-height desk
- Student needing to use their own or a specific keyboard or mouse (for an examination on PC/laptop)
- Students with hearing impairments requiring a T-loop or for announcements to be provided in written format
- Students with visual impairments requiring question papers and/or answer booklets to be enlarged and/or to be printed on coloured paper
- Students with visual impairments bringing their own coloured overlay or coloured glasses into an examination
- Students needing to stretch their hands/wrists at their desks (provided this can be done without disturbing others)
- Students who need to make frequent visits to the toilet, provided that an invigilator is not required to record the length and duration of these
- Students who need to take medication or small snacks into the examination room, provided that this does not disturb others
- Students requiring a personal carer to be available outside the examination room, to assist with toilet breaks and entering/leaving the room

- Students using screen reader software, provided they wear headphones which fully contain any noise.

Examples of adjustments which can only be accommodated if students sit examinations separately (usually at their college)

- Students requiring more than 15 minutes per hour extra time (both when handwriting and when using a PC/laptop, for writing/typing and/or resting)
- Students needing to sit examinations in a room on their own
- Students requiring a separate room for rest breaks, or whose rest breaks need to be recorded/timed by an invigilator
- Students needing to lie down, stand, stretch substantially or move around during an examination in ways which would disturb others
- Students with mobility difficulties who are unable to use either a standard or adjustable desk
- Students needing to dictate their answers to an amanuensis or to assistive software
- Students needing to have their question papers or answers read out loud, either by themselves or by an amanuensis or screen reader (not using headphones)
- Students needing to take food and drink into the examination room which would disturb others
- Students needing to be carefully or individually monitored during an examination (e.g. reminded to take medication)
- Students requiring a mentor or personal carer to be with them in the examination room during examinations.

Students taking papers at a different time from the rest of their cohort will generally need to sit these in their college.