

## **INTERMISSION: COLLEGE GUIDANCE NOTES FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS**

During the course of your studies you may find that you are unable to continue because of a health condition (physical or mental), disability-related issues, bereavement, financial reasons, or another serious reason. In these circumstances, you can apply for permission to take time out (normally an academic or calendar year) by intermitting in order to get back on track.

The purpose of intermission is to allow you the necessary time and distance away your 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 you as a result of ill health or other grave cause.

You must contact your Tutor to discuss your situation and the implications of intermitting, as they will need to apply on your behalf to the University for permission to take time out or 'disregard terms' in University language. You may also wish to consult the Students' Unions' Advice Service.

The notes below are intended to give you important information about what is involved in applying for an allowance to intermit, and the procedure which must be followed on your return to the College after any period away.

You are asked to read these Notes carefully 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 Applications Committee Notes for Guidance for Staff and Students:  
<http://www.student-registry.admin.cam.ac.uk/about-us/applications-committee>.

You may also wish to read the guidance on intermission written by CUSU:

<http://www.disabled.cusu.cam.ac.uk/intermission/>

### **1. What is involved?**

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.

In the great majority of circumstances, intermission will involve your leaving your College residence to take time out of your studies. The grounds for intermission are usually very serious, and the permission to intermit is granted on the basis that you are facing grave circumstances that make it impossible for you to continue with your studies without the time away. These are such problems as a chronic or acute illness, serious disability-related issues, bereavement or other grave cause.

If you are considering a change of Tripos you should consult with your Tutor and Director of Studies at the earliest opportunity as there may be a requirement that you intermit before you can make this change.

Your College will apply to the Applications Committee of the University Council for permission for you to intermit; if granted, permission is normally given for intermission during a complete academic or calendar year.

## **2. Consultation within College**

The decision to apply for intermission can be taken only after consultation with your Tutor, Director of Studies and/or Senior Tutor.

If you are applying for intermission on medical grounds, it may be important to plan for treatment of some kind, to maximize your chances of a good recovery and a successful return to study. If this applies, your Tutor and/or Senior Tutor will want to discuss this with you; as well as plans for supporting your return.

## **3. Implications of intermission**

Intermission may have considerable implications, and you should take these into account and discuss them with your Tutor and Director of Studies when deciding whether or not you want to apply to intermit.

### *Financial*

Permission to go out of residence after attending for part or all of a term will not automatically lead to cancellation of your fee liability for that term. You will become liable for fees for any term or terms in which you have been in residence for more than 21 days. If you have remained in residence for a longer period, there may, in exceptional cases, be grounds to apply for a fee remission; your Tutor will be able to advise on whether your circumstances may warrant this.

If you are eligible for a student loan or a Disabled Students' Allowance, speak to your Tutor about how intermission will impact your continued eligibility for these sources of support.

### *Academic*

Your Director of Studies will work with your Tutor to give you advice about the academic implications of intermitting including course/paper availability when you expect to return, any planned changes to your course (set texts/topics etc.) and whether work can be carried forward. Your Director of Studies may need to give you specific advice about regulations for a particular Tripos.

### *Tier 4 visa*

If you are studying on a Tier 4 visa, the University would normally be required to cease Tier 4 sponsorship during intermission and report the change in circumstances to the Home Office. Your current Tier 4 visa would subsequently be curtailed and you would be required to leave the UK. You would need to obtain a new Tier 4 visa from overseas prior to returning to Cambridge to recommence your studies.

### *Access to College/University facilities and premises*

During intermission, you will remain free to visit the city of Cambridge and to meet up with College/University friends if you mutually wish to do so. However, 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 not able to study. As such, in all but very exceptional cases, permission to intermit will require you to leave your College residence. Furthermore, you will not be permitted to use/access your College's or the University's facilities/premises, even for social visits or events, during your break from study without prior permission from your College.

It is therefore essential to discuss with your Tutor any social arrangements you might wish to request for returning to College or University premises so this can be given full consideration. This can be done as you leave or subsequently.

Exceptions to bear in mind:

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

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

#### *Other*

Your Tutor will be able to explain any other implications of intermission, if applicable.

There may be a considerable amount of information imparted to you during discussions about intermission and its implications. Given the sometimes complex and detailed nature of these conversations and the difficult circumstances you may be facing at the time, you are encouraged to ask your Tutor or Senior Tutor to put any key points you need to know in writing to you so you can refer back to it later. It is also worth noting that the full implications of intermission may not be known at the time you go out of residence, particularly if your intermission continues for more than a year. However, your College will keep you informed of any new developments whilst you are intermitting.

You may also wish to consult with the Students' Unions' Advice Service to explore any implications of intermission, or read guidance on intermission written by CUSU (<http://www.disabled.cusu.cam.ac.uk/intermission/>).

#### **4. University Application to be allowed to intermit**

The actual application to intermit will be made by your Tutor or Senior Tutor on your behalf to the Applications Committee.

As part of an application, the Applications Committee will expect to see evidence of your circumstances. In the case of intermission on medical/health grounds or serious disability-related issues, medical evidence from a registered medical professional (such as a GP or an accredited counsellor) will be required, confirming that you are unable to continue with your course. With your consent, your College may write to your medical practitioner asking for a report. Alternatively, you may seek this yourself but please see Appendix 1 for guidance notes on medical evidence. It is recommended that these notes be provided to the medical professional providing evidence to support your application.

Evidence to support intermission due to other grave cause may take a variety of forms but must demonstrate the circumstances you are facing are serious, unanticipated and beyond your control and should be provided by an appropriate, independent professional or body (e.g. a death certificate).

Other information is also required as part of an application, including an application form, a covering statement from your College as well as supervision reports and any formal marks received to date. For intermission on medical grounds, you will also have to sign a declaration form giving permission for medical evidence to be seen by a member of the Committee. You can also provide a brief statement yourself in support of your application and may wish to consult the Students' Unions' Advice Service regarding this.

Your College will be required to state explicitly whether it supports your case. It is good practice for you to be made fully aware of all the documentation being submitted to the Applications Committee on your behalf.

### **5. Before you go**

Where possible, your Tutor will meet with you before you leave to go over any relevant documentation. This might include relevant sections from these notes, the Applications Committee guidance notes, the College's statement to the Applications Committee, the application form, the declaration form permitting medical evidence to be viewed by members of the Applications Committee and generally ensuring all documentation is in order.

Your Tutor will also want to discuss the method and frequency with which they might contact you whilst you are intermitting. It is not common for contact to be regular but you may appreciate an email or call at a certain point whilst you are away and your Tutor will want to consider what will be most helpful in your particular circumstances and what your preferences are in this respect. You may also wish to discuss access to the College Nurse or College Counsellor (if your College has them) during intermission.

It is your College Tutor's responsibility to write to you to confirm whether your application to intermit has been approved. They should also provide a copy of the Applications Committee's letter to you. Approval to intermit may come with certain College-imposed or Applications Committee-imposed conditions which must be satisfied before you will be permitted to return to study. 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 medical treatment or psychological support. Any conditions should be clearly and unambiguously set out to you, along with any relevant deadlines, in writing, at the point that intermission is approved. If you have concerns about any of the conditions which have been imposed, you should approach your Tutor or Senior Tutor, or if you feel you need impartial support you can contact the Students' Unions' Advice Service.

### **6. Whilst you're intermitting**

Whilst you are intermitting, you may wish to:

- Visit the University's student wellbeing pages: [www.cambridgestudents.cam.ac.uk/welfare-and-wellbeing](http://www.cambridgestudents.cam.ac.uk/welfare-and-wellbeing)
- Visit the Facebook support group for intermitting students, which is maintained by CUSU: [www.facebook.com/groups/1547925268789968](https://www.facebook.com/groups/1547925268789968)
- Contact the Students' Unions' Advice Service, which provides free confidential, impartial, and non-directive advice to Cambridge students: [www.studentadvice.cam.ac.uk](http://www.studentadvice.cam.ac.uk)

- Contact the Disability Resource Centre, if you are intermitting as a result of a newly diagnosed medical condition or disability, to ensure that any support and associated funding can be put in place in time for your return. Depending on the nature of your medical condition or disability, the Disability Resource Centre may also be able to arrange study skills or mentor support to help you to develop strategies and assist you in a successful return to study: [www.disability.admin.cam.ac.uk](http://www.disability.admin.cam.ac.uk)
- Read the guidance on intermission written by CUSU: <http://www.disabled.cusu.cam.ac.uk/intermission/>
- Clarify when your College's room balloting will take place (bear in mind that the relevance of this will depend on the time of year you anticipate returning to study.)
- Contact the University's International Student Team if you are a Tier 4 student for advice on making your new visa application prior to returning to Cambridge: <https://www.ist.admin.cam.ac.uk/>
- If you were receiving support from the University Counselling Service prior to intermission, speak to them if you need help sourcing access to counselling support outside the UCS whilst you are intermitting.

## **7. Before you return to study**

### *Evidence*

Both your College and the Applications Committee will need to be fully satisfied that the circumstances which prompted the need for you to intermit have improved sufficiently to allow you to return and complete your course successfully.

If you intermit for medical, disability or health reasons, you will not be permitted to return into residence until medical evidence has been provided which confirms you are fit to resume your course. With your consent, your Tutor may write to your GP to seek a report on your behalf. Alternatively, you can provide this yourself but please see Appendix 1 for guidance on medical evidence. These notes should be provided to the medical professional who is best placed to comment on your state of health at the time you wish to return to study and, wherever possible, this should be the same person who provided the medical evidence to support your original application. If it is someone different, you should ensure that the new practitioner is provided with a copy of the original medical evidence, to ensure they have all the information necessary to inform their judgement regarding your fitness to return to study. The evidence provided to support a return to study should be based on a medical assessment held not earlier than the following dates:

For Michaelmas return: assessment not earlier than 1<sup>st</sup> July; form to College normally by 10<sup>th</sup> August  
 For Lent return: assessment not earlier than 1<sup>st</sup> October; form to College normally by 10<sup>th</sup> November  
 For Easter return: assessment not earlier than 1<sup>st</sup> February; form to College normally by 10<sup>th</sup> March.

Medical evidence should state that you have recovered or that any medical condition or disability you have can be satisfactorily managed, with necessary support measures in place, to allow you to return and complete your course successfully. The Applications Committee will need to see this evidence, and permission to return will not be finally confirmed until they have done so.

If necessary, an application to extend your period of intermission can be made to the Applications Committee via your Tutor. Further evidence will be required to support any extension request.

### *Academic assessments*

Your College may require you to take an academic assessment before permission to return is granted. If this is the case, this will have been confirmed to you by your College as a condition of

your return at the point intermission was granted, along with the nature of the assessment and the standard of performance that will be required.

Whilst undertaking an assessment may feel daunting, Colleges will only impose this as a condition of return where they believe there are strong pedagogical grounds for doing so and will liaise with you in advance about the support that is available. This might include, for example, a limited period of access to College/University facilities such as libraries and accommodation, and/or time with a supervisor or Director of Studies in the lead up to your assessment and formal return to study.

If you require any adjustments to examinations as a result of a medical condition or disability, your College should honour these adjustments for any academic assessment following intermission. If you will be returning to study having been newly diagnosed with a long term medical condition or disability which may require reasonable adjustments that have not been put in place for examinations previously, it is recommended you speak to the Disability Resource Centre well in advance of your expected return to study to ensure that your support requirements can be determined in advance. Depending on the nature of your disability or medical condition and support needs, the DRC may also be able to provide support from a specialist study skills tutor to assist you in transitioning back to study.

If you require a Tier 4 visa to study, you will need to liaise with the University's International Student Team for advice on making your new visa application prior to returning to Cambridge: <https://www.ist.admin.cam.ac.uk/>.

### **8. On returning from intermission**

Usually you will be asked to meet with your Tutor as soon as you return to study. This meeting can be informal but should aim to:

- welcome you back to College
- ensure that any new requirements are identified to enable support mechanisms to be put in place, including disability-related support if applicable
- bring you up to date on any relevant changes that have occurred within College during your time away
- agree with you what information regarding your circumstances will be shared with your DoS, supervisors and Faculty/Department and who will share it
- if you are returning as a first year student, you should be given an opportunity to provide your preferences regarding; participating in college-run Freshers' events; attending functions such as the matriculation dinner; whether you would like to be allocated a college or subject 'parent' (where applicable).
- it is often very helpful for the JCR Welfare Officers to be informed of a student's return from intermission and your Tutor may seek your permission to do this.

The University Counselling Service also runs workshops for intermission returners which you may find helpful. Details are regularly updated on the UCS webpages: <http://www.counselling.cam.ac.uk/studentcouns/studentgroups>.

You may find it beneficial to regularly check in with your Tutor to discuss how you are settling back in to study and College life following return from intermission. Your Tutor may arrange to discuss this with you specifically, or you can raise it at your regular tutorial meetings.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **NOTES ON MEDICAL EVIDENCE**

#### **Application to intermit**

Please try to ensure that any medical professional providing medical evidence to support your application to intermit gives a clear diagnosis including both the nature and severity of your illness/medical condition/disability, and how this is likely to have affected your examination preparation and/or performance. The evidence should also indicate when the medical professional considers it likely that you would be able to resume your studies and any measures that may be necessary to support you when this happens.

Specific questions to ask them to address in their evidence letter supporting your application to intermit include:

1. What is/are the medical reason(s) for the student to need to intermit his/her studies?
2. What was the date on which you first saw the student for this illness/medical condition/disability?
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. If you know that there is a lengthy waiting list for such treatment, please indicate how long this is likely to be.
5. What is the prognosis for this condition and when is it likely that the student will be fit to resume study?

#### **Application to return into residence**

If you have intermitted on medical grounds, a further application to the Applications Committee will be required before you are permitted to return into residence. Medical evidence from a doctor, psychiatrist or accredited counsellor must be provided and whenever possible it should be from the same person who made the original diagnosis to support your application to intermit. The evidence should address the points made in the original diagnosis. The original report should be made available to the practitioner should there be a change of personnel. Your College may reserve the right to seek a further independent medical assessment. If you are undergoing continuing psychiatric treatment, full details of future supervision or monitoring arrangements should also be provided when applying to resume study.

Specific questions to ask the medical professional to address in their evidence letter supporting your application to return to study:

1. What was the original diagnosis which caused the student to intermit?
2. What treatment was given and has the student fully recovered or is ongoing treatment or support required to manage the illness/medical condition/disability? Please provide details.
3. In your opinion is the student fit to return to University study? Is that fitness to return conditional on further support?
4. If further support is required, please provide a prognosis and give details of what support or supervision is necessary for the student to study successfully (for example from academic advisers, College Nurse, etc.). In the case of psychiatric treatment, full details of any subsequent supervision or monitoring should be given.