

Student Advice Service's
**GUIDANCE ON WRITING YOUR
PERSONAL STATEMENT FOR AN
EXAMINATION ALLOWANCE**



GUIDANCE THAT MAY HELP YOU WRITE YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT

Whether you make an application yourself or your College submits it on your behalf, you can write a personal statement to support your application.

It is important to read the University's [Guidance Notes for Examination Allowances](#) and the Student Advice Service's [Guidance on Examination Allowance](#) before completing the forms and writing your personal statement. You can get advice and ask questions from your College Tutor and/or an Advisor at the [Student Advice Service](#).

A personal statement is a short piece of writing about yourself and your circumstances in your own words. This is your opportunity to let the University know of your circumstances and the impact these had on your ability to study and/or your examinations.

The University recommends a student's personal statement should be concise and no longer than one-two A4 pages.

You could consider the following points that may assist you in writing your personal statement:

- Indicate the allowance you are requesting. E.g. you are applying for an Examination Allowance to be Allowed to Progress.
- Describe your circumstances and the reason/s for the request. E.g. illness, family bereavement, an accident on the way to the exam, etc.
- Describe how your circumstances affected your ability to study and engage with aspects of your course. E.g. attending supervisions and/or completing work for supervisions, attending lectures, engaging and completing group/project work, studying.
- Describe how your circumstances affected your day-to-day life and the impact they had on your wellbeing. E.g. eating, sleeping, concentrating, engaging with your academic and social life, feeling anxious, depressive, etc.

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- Describe how your circumstances affected your performance in the examination. E.g. you felt unwell during the exam: you had a fever, you experienced a panic attack or you had physical pain. It is a good idea to detail your experience. For example, if you had physical pain you could describe what the pain was and how intense it was on a scale of 1-10; describe the impact it had on your performance during the exam: you could no longer focus on answering the exam questions (you could give examples to support your statement), you felt distracted and this prevented you from being able to complete the exam.
- Give details of the support you sought. E.g. you informed the invigilator and left the exam room, you contacted your Tutor, the College Nurse, GP or another medical practitioner, etc.
- If you have not sought support at the time, it would be a good idea for you to explain why. If the issue was medical, you could speak with a medical professional to obtain post-hoc evidence. You could explain to them what happened (how you were feeling, when and what impact this had on your studies and/or exams) and ask them to write a letter. It would be helpful if in the letter the doctor offered their professional opinion of how your experience would have impacted your studies/exams. Additionally, a full explanation as to why the medical evidence could not be obtained at the time, or immediately after, should be included in the application. Your doctor could also comment on why you could not obtain this information earlier.
- You could give examples to illustrate your situation.
- Be specific about your extenuating circumstances.
- Be clear, concise and provide the right amount of detail.
- Include dates in chronological order to outline your circumstances.

EXAMPLE OF PERSONAL STATEMENT:

ILL-HEALTH

Dear Exam Access and Mitigation Committee,

I am writing in support of my application for an Examination Allowance to be Allowed to Progress.

I am a second-year undergraduate student studying Natural Sciences, and a member of Lucy Cavendish College.

On 24 May 2021, I became unwell with the flu. The symptoms I experienced were a high temperature of 39-40 degrees Celsius, tiredness, weakness and dizziness, muscle pain, headaches and nausea. This was during the week prior to my Physics examination, as well as the examination day. During this time, I was so unwell that I was unable to study and prepare for the exam. I spent most of the time in bed, sleeping and resting. I felt very tired despite being in my room and resting in bed. I felt nauseous which meant I could not eat much, although I tried to eat little and often as advised by the College Nurse. Not being able to eat much made my body feel weak and I lacked energy. I felt pains in my body: headaches, muscle pain and tummy aches. I took paracetamol and ibuprofen to help reduce my temperature and ease my body aches.

On 25 May 2021, I contacted my College Tutor to let them know of my situation. They asked me to keep them informed of my condition and told me that they can submit an exam warning if I do not feel better in the next few days.

On 25 May 2021, I also contacted the College Nurse who gave me advice on how to care for myself: drink plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration, eat little and often, rest and isolate to avoid passing it on to other students or College staff members. She asked me to keep in touch with her and to contact my GP if I continue to feel unwell or if my condition worsens. She also advised me to contact 111, if I need help when the GP or the College Nurses are not available.

In the days to follow, I kept my Tutor and the College Nurse informed about my condition. My Tutor submitted an exam warning on 27 May 2021, a day before the exam. On my exam day, I wrote an email to my Tutor and Tutorial Office letting them know I was still very unwell, as such I will not be able to sit the exam. The Tutorial Office responded to inform me that I was withdrawn from the exam.

EXAMPLE OF PERSONAL STATEMENT: ILL-HEALTH

The following week, when I started to feel better, my Tutor and I discussed my options. It was presented to me that, given my ill-health the week before and during the exam, an application for an Examination Allowance to be Allowed to Progress to the next year can be made to the Exam Access and Mitigation Committee.

Please find attached to my application including supporting letters from my College Nurse and Tutor detailing my condition and the support I received.

Thank you for considering my application and I hope that the Committee will be satisfied that my mitigating circumstances are supportive of an Examination Allowance. I would be grateful if the committee would grant my request to be allowed to progress to the next year. I care deeply about my studies and I hope to be successful in completing my degree at Cambridge.

*Yours sincerely,
John Smith*

Note: This is a fictional example. Although it has not been inspired by real-life situations, it could be that some students might have had similar experiences and might identify themselves with that situation. Our aim is to provide an example based on a common issue that students might experience before or during the examination period.

TEMPLATE - PERSONAL STATEMENT FOR AN EXAMINATION ALLOWANCE

Dear Exam Access and Mitigation Committee,

I am writing in support of my application for an Examination Allowance to [include the allowance requested (e.g. Allowed to Progress, Allowed the Examination etc.)].

I am a [include your student status and the degree you study towards], a member of [include the name of your College] College.

[Body:

Describe your circumstances

If possible, include dates in chronological order

Explain the impact your circumstances have had on your ability to study and/or your exam/s

Indicate what support you accessed, if any

If you have not sought support or sought support after the event, explain why]

Please find attached to my application supporting evidence from my [indicate who provided the evidence (e.g. GP or another medical professional, hospital admission, a death certificate, a letter from your College Tutor, DoS, College Nurse, etc.)].

Thank you for considering my application and I hope that the Committee will be satisfied that my mitigating circumstances are supportive of an Examination Allowance. I would be grateful if the committee would grant my request [include the allowance you requested]. I care deeply about my studies and I hope to be successful in completing my degree at Cambridge.

Yours sincerely,
[include your name]

WHERE CAN I GO FOR MORE INFORMATION AND SUPPORT?

Consider speaking to your College Tutor, or you can access one-to-one advice from one of our Advisors at the Student Advice Service.

HOW CAN STUDENTS ACCESS ADVICE FROM THE STUDENT ADVICE SERVICE?

You can email advice@cambridgesu.co.uk or use our website contact form www.cambridgesu.co.uk/support/advice/contact/ to make an appointment to speak with an Advisor. Appointments can be conducted over the phone or via video call. We are also happy to communicate with students by email, only if that is what they prefer.

USEFUL RESOURCES

Student Advice Service Information and Resources on Exams
www.cambridgesu.co.uk/advice/information/exams/

University of Cambridge Exam Access and Mitigation Committee's webpage
www.student-registry.admin.cam.ac.uk/about-us/EAMC

University of Cambridge Guidance for Medical Practitioners
www.cambridgestudents.cam.ac.uk/files/guidance_for_medical_practitioners.pdf

University of Cambridge Mitigation
www.cambridgestudents.cam.ac.uk/your-course/examinations/mitigation

Office of the Independent Adjudicator Good Practice Framework for Additional Consideration
www.oiahe.org.uk/media/2544/oia-gpf-requests-for-additional-consideration.pdf