Intermitting
and support from the Counselling Service

Intermitting is the word used in Cambridge to describe taking time out from your studies. It is a process available to both undergraduate and postgraduate students. It actually means the disregarding of terms for the purpose of calculating your standing to take an examination. The length of time away will vary according to your needs and the details of the situation regarding your studies, but is typically one or two terms.

There are many reasons why you may want to intermit. While you are not able to continue with your studies, the underlying factor might be an illness, a bereavement, a traumatic event or another physical or psychological cause.

If you are an undergraduate, you can find out more about the process of intermission on the Cambridge Students’ webpage: www.studentwellbeing.admin.cam.ac.uk/support-particular-issues/intermission

And for graduate students: www.cambridgestudents.cam.ac.uk/your-course/graduate-study/your-student-status/intermission-medical-and-non-medical

Applying to intermit

Before applying for intermission you may well want to talk through the benefits and disadvantages with your tutor, Director of Studies, supervisor, an advisor at the Student Union Advice Service, friends and family, your GP, counsellor or mental health advisor.
While you may feel a range of conflicting feelings such as worry, guilt, shame, embarrassment, regret and loss, it is common, too, to feel a sense of relief whatever decision you make: a crisis usually passes, and sometimes more quickly than you think. It can be reassuring to know that many students return from intermitting each year.

Your tutor is the most likely person to help you make a formal application and will discuss whether or not the college will back your application. The application will usually need supporting evidence in the form of a letter from your GP, mental health advisor or counsellor, if you were engaged with our service. The formal decision to grant intermission rests with the University’s Applications Committee, or Degree Committee for postgraduates.

**While you are away from Cambridge**

If you are granted intermission you are usually required to leave college accommodation and do not have continued access to university support services, such as the Counselling Service. Exceptions include access to the Student Union Advice Service and the Disability Resource Centre.

It is important to think about how you will look after yourself while away to help resolve the underlying issues to your intermission. For some people, time itself will help. Attending to practical matters away from university can be settling in itself. Sometimes, too, counselling is helpful. This can be arranged via your local GP or local agencies.
Returning to study

When you intermit, you will have agreed when you are expected to return to your studies. It is important that you are aware of the procedures to follow with regard to your return from intermission and, depending on the reasons for your intermission, may require medical evidence to confirm that you are fit to resume your course. Your tutor will be able to advise you on the requirements.

You may feel relief or excitement at getting back to university. You may also feel anxious and worried, wondering: Will I be able to work again? What if I can’t cope? Will I link up with my old friends or will they have moved on? You may feel guilty or not accept that intermitting was a positive and helpful step for you to take.

UCS workshops for undergraduate students returning from intermission

The Counselling Service runs workshops specifically for students returning from intermitting. There are often similar feelings about coming back. Hearing how it is for others and talking about your experience can be reassuring. The workshops, at the start of Michaelmas and Lent Terms, are designed to address the most common issues and can help you ease back in more smoothly.

You can find more details of these and other workshops and groups on our website: https://www.counselling.cam.ac.uk/studentcouns/groups
If you are interested in attending these workshops, please contact the Counselling Service Reception on 01223 332865, or email counsellingreception@admin.cam.ac.uk

Useful resources

There is a wide selection of self-help resources listed on the University Counselling Service website. These can be found at: www.counselling.cam.ac.uk/selfhelp