

# Accommodation welfare exemptions 2023

This document on accommodation welfare needs and exceptions has been put together by the college's head of welfare (Tim Harling), its clinical lead (Jenny Schiller), and mental/physical health nurse (Emily Farrar) with the advice, support and approval of the tutors, health and wellbeing team and a dedicated JCR subcommittee.

**This process runs from Monday 26<sup>th</sup> June to Friday 30<sup>th</sup> June**

We understand that accommodation can be about more than just getting the best room, or being around friends. For some, it is an issue of safety, accessibility and physical logistics. We want to support students in the best way possible - which means respecting confidentiality while being transparent about our processes. This is why we have worked together with the JCR, and others, to develop a bespoke system for accommodation welfare considerations.

## 1. What does this mean?

We recognise there are some students in our community who will need to live in certain room types for the next academic year. This is different to hoping for a specific room, location, or set of neighbours: it is for those who require particular consideration because of a specific condition or circumstance they face. These considerations will often be deeply personal and private. We want to assure you of the confidentiality of any information you submit. In summary- this is for students with a **requirement not a preference.**

## 2. Who is this aimed at?

The JCR is working with college to ensure all students get as much choice as possible. The accommodation welfare system is an *additional* process to this - designed for those who need to be exempt from the main selection. Specifically, this includes those students:

- with a health condition or disability (physical or psychological) that means some accommodation allocation would exclude them from being able to continue their studies, or;
- who have been individually subjected to specific harassment or assault, meaning they need to be housed away from another student or group of students for their physical and psychological security. This is a continuation of our commitments set out in our HAO policy. *(Any student can regularly specify they do not want to be housed next to another student, but this should be put in the **comment box on the regular ballot** (not this welfare ballot) and the rooms clerk will do all she can to facilitate this.)*

## 3. What are the potential problems?

If you fall into one of the above categories, we want to hear from you. We are especially concerned that students who need to access this system may not come forward. We are also

worried that some of the complex information of those who do come forward may be lost among students who did not need to apply 'flooding' the inbox. Of course, **every student who is removed from the Ballot means the ballot is less of a ballot for others**. Getting this right is, as you can see, complicated and sensitive.

#### 4. If I apply for a welfare exemption do I still apply for the regular ballot?

YES- not everyone who applies will reach the threshold for being removed from the regular ballot. Also this will protect your anonymity. We ask all students to use the general system in addition to any application through welfare. This protects your confidentiality within your friendship group which is important. What you do with your information is up to you; we do not want to put you in a position where you have to disclose personal information to your friends unnecessarily.

#### 5. If I apply for an exemption, will I still be able to choose to live with a friend?

Yes- however this is capped at 2 additional people (so household of 3). This is to balance care for those excluded from the ballot on welfare grounds and not removing too many people from the ballot (see bold sentence in 'What are the potential problems' above). You can co-ordinate with others in the regular ballot so they opt for similar rooms to the ones you require, putting in a preference to be housed with you, to maximise the chance of you living with a wider cohort of people you know. Regular ballot users can use the comment box on the Ballot for this.

We realise that capping the number of people to live with is contentious. We have consulted with the welfare team, the tutors, the Accessibility & Disability Resource Centre (ADRC) and the JCR subcommittee in making this balance in order to value those with additional requirements and the needs of those in the regular ballot.

#### 6. Does the welfare Ballot include the anomalous Ballot that happens before the regular Ballot?

No. The welfare Ballot is about ensuring that those with clinical/specific need are in the right sort of rooms, not specific rooms.

#### 7. What will happen with your information?

Those who need to access the system should email [accommodation.welfare@queens.cam.ac.uk](mailto:accommodation.welfare@queens.cam.ac.uk). This email will only be seen by the Clinical Lead and College Nurse. They will share the information with the Head of Welfare after they have

triated each student and ascertained need, evidence (if applicable), and risk. Anything you send will **only** be seen by these people, nobody else. No information will be put on your 'college file', nor be accessible to anyone except those mentioned above. We want to give you confidence in the system, and appreciate this involves trust, which is why we are making the process transparent.

## 8. What 'evidence' will be needed?

This will be different in each situation. If you have a medical condition it will, in most situations, mean you submitting clear and explicit letters of diagnosis with specific medical requirements (not preferences) for accommodation. **Please be pro-active.** Feedback last year was that some struggled to get/find/ask for this evidence within the time slot. Because of this we are lengthening the application window but are also asking people to act as soon as this document is published- starting to get their paperwork together- so they are ready to submit their evidence in the time window of the welfare Ballot. If you are unsure about this please come to one of the welfare drop in sessions and discuss this with Jenny or Emily in the health centre any day Monday-Friday (0830-0930 or 1300-1400) in the run up to the ballot.

Many students have a Student Support Document (SSD). If the contents of the SSD make reference to accommodation type you will still need to apply via the welfare exemption policy; we do not want to assume implication about your health as this is personal and 'owned' by you.

## 9. How accountable is this process?

Our principles and policies are being set out publicly because we are determined to be as open and transparent as possible. However, this transparency is harder to maintain when we start dealing with actual people and their confidential issues. Therefore, we have put in place several procedures:

- All information will be looked at by both the Clinical Lead and College Nurse, including any relevant supporting documents or evidence. All information will be stored as medical in-confidence on your medical records.
- The college's Head of Welfare- supported by the Clinical Lead and College Nurse- will then produce a plan to best accommodate people where possible. This will be anonymised, and then interrogated by the Senior Tutor, Deputy Senior Tutor, an additional HAO and the Head of the University's Access and Disability Resource Centre (ADRC). If any student wishes to ask for one of these people not to be involved in this anonymised process, in their case, that is absolutely fine.
- At that stage, when all are satisfied, this special exception room allocation will take place, prior to the allocation for all other students. Those housed according to welfare needs will not be identified in any form to other students: this is managed entirely confidentially and discreetly.

## 10. What about the general system of room allocations?

This will be communicated by the Domestic Bursar, with the college aiming to be both as realistic and as flexible as possible. The JCR is also in regular communication with college

about this. This will, of course, be the process that **most students follow**. Any anxieties or comments about this system can be fed back to college via the JCR, or tutors.

We hope this system is seen as a positive reflection of who and what we are at Queens'.

If you are unsure about anything in this document, please contact the dedicated email address ([accommodation.welfare@queens.cam.ac.uk](mailto:accommodation.welfare@queens.cam.ac.uk)) for general or person-specific (confidential) enquiries.

Many thanks,

Jenny Schiller (Clinical Lead)  
Emily Farrar (College Nurse)  
Tim Harling (Head of Welfare)