

BME FRESHERS' GUIDE 2020



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howard.chae@cambridgesu.co.uk

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FOREWORD

Cambridge can be an exhausting and alienating place to navigate for many Black & Minority Ethnic (BME) students - from a 'pale, male, and stale' curriculum which continues to reflect and reproduce structures of power that are historically rooted in colonialism, to racist surveillance legislation which singles out Muslim students for 'counter-terrorism,' to routine racial profiling at college gates by porters.

This guide aims to support BME students by providing guidance about how to navigate university life, both academically and socially. We've listed some key sources of support that BME students can access whenever they need to and compiled advice according to subject. This guide is by no means exhaustive, and we hope that it will be used in combination with other resources and networks of support that BME students have created in the past to pass down knowledge to freshers. Some other resources that we would recommend you also check out are:

- **The BME Mental Health Toolkit:** This guide was originally started by Christine, the 2018-19 CUSU Welfare & Rights Officer. It came out of a need for targeted advice for BME students on how to access support. It was completed by the BME Campaign's Mental Health & Disabilities Officer, Elia, and launched on World Mental Health Day in October 2020.
- **The FLY Guide to Cambridge:** This collection of tips for navigating university life was created by FLY, a network for BME women and non-binary people.

The overarching message of this guide is that it's okay to feel lost - Cambridge is confusing, even at the best of times (never mind the disruption of COVID-19...). Build and draw on networks of support within your college and subject cohort, and reach out to societies and communities such as FUSE, FLY, and, of course, the BME Campaign - we can't wait to meet you!

DEFINING "BME"

BME stands for Black and Minority Ethnic (or BAME, which stands for Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic). It is a common term which is used in the UK to refer to minority groups, encompassing basically anyone and everyone who's racialised as 'not white.'

The origins of the term "BME" can be traced back to the anti-racist movements and mobilisations of the 1970s, when activist from various minority groups mobilised against routine violence and discrimination using the label of 'political blackness' - anyone who wasn't 'white' labelled themselves as 'black' in order to forge a collective voice against racism which united different minority groups. The term "BME" arose out of a perceived need for a descriptor which didn't flatten differences and divisions between communities but at the same time recognised their shared experiences of marginalisation.

Whether the label "BME" is actually useful as a tool to mobilise racialised groups against racism is disputed - it's the subject of many of the same criticisms that were made against 'political blackness.' When we talk about racism, we need to keep in mind that the meaning of race isn't fixed and is constantly changing, and so any term we use to describe racialisation will never be able to fully capture all its complexities and ambiguities. What we can do is recognise that we live in a global system which disproportionately harms certain bodies over others.

Regardless of which term we choose to use to define ourselves, our attention needs to be focused on building solidarity between different groups with the aim of dismantling racism in whatever guise it is operating and the structures and relations of power that perpetuate it.

At Cambridge, the BME Campaign aims to highlight the diversity of experiences within the umbrella of "BME" and give all groups and communities within it a united voice against racism.



THE BME CAMPAIGN

The Cambridge Students' Union (SU) BME Campaign supports, represents, and advocates for all BME students at the University of Cambridge. Like the other SU 'Liberation Campaigns' (e.g. the Women's Campaign and the Disabled Students' Campaign), the BME Campaign is affiliated with the SU and represents a particular subset of the SU's membership but maintains a high level of autonomy, managing its own budget and passing its own policies to work towards the liberation of BME students.

The Campaign organises events to provide BME students with spaces for socialising and community building, coordinates with J/MCR BME officers and societies to strengthen BME student representation in colleges and faculties, and campaigns on the big issues that matter to BME students - everything ranging from the lack of targeted mental health support for BME students and racist treatment by student-facing staff, to the Prevent Duty and the Collegiate University's links with the arms trade, fossil fuel lobby, and corporations that profit from the death and destruction of communities of colour across the globe.

After years of building and mobilising student support, the BME Campaign successfully secured dedicated representation on the full-time sabbatical officer team of Cambridge SU starting in 2020-21, in the form of the BME Officer. The BME Campaign is a place of life, a space for celebration, and a team ready to bring change. If you self-identify as BME, then you can shape the work we do: come along to our open forums to vote on issues, voice your opinions, and join a campaign ready to see change happen now. See you then!

MEET THE COMMITTEE!



Howard (he/him)
Cambridge SU
BME Officer



Roshni (she/her)
Chair



Mia (she/her)
Vice Chair



Jaina (she/her)
Secretary



Tami (she/her)
Access Officer



Princella (she/her)
Treasurer

MEET THE COMMITTEE!



Mojola (she/her)
Publicity Officer



Yasmine (she/her)
Events Officer



Ayan (she/her)
Events Officer



Jordhi (she/her)
Campaigns
Officer



Simran (she/her)
Campaigns
Officer



Elia (they/them)
Mental Health &
Disabilities Officer

MEET THE COMMITTEE!



Jazal (he/him)
Education Officer



Tolu (she/her)
Education Officer



Maya (she/her)
Women's Officer



Anaya (she/her)
LGBT+ Officer



Maro (she/her)
International
Students' Officer



Postgrad Officer
By-Elections for
this position will
be held in
Michaelmas 2020

BEING BME: SUPPORT

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Below is a list of who you can go to for support if you've experienced or witnessed racism:

- Your College JCR/MCR BME Officer

For their 2020 Report, the End Everyday Racism project found that “one of the most recurrent emotions expressed by respondents is the need to validate the feelings and the incident.” We’re socialised to downplay racism, so it’s common for victims of racism to doubt their own experiences and think they are “over-reacting to the situation” or being “over-sensitive.”



If you’ve experienced or witnessed racism, hold onto your feelings and speak to your BME Officer, who can validate the reality of your experience and help you process your emotions, giving you the confidence to believe in yourself. They can also signpost you to appropriate sources of support (more on what these are below...) and raise concerns on your behalf to your college.

BEING BME: SUPPORT

- The Students' Advice Service

The Advice Service are a team of full-time, accredited case-workers who provide free, confidential support for students on all matters relating to University rules and regulations. They are not affiliated with the University and follow a Code of Conduct and Confidentiality Policy, which prioritises students' wellbeing. We recommend that you meet with the Advice Service as soon as you can - they will explain to you what your options are and help you to navigate policies and procedures. To set up an appointment, email advice@cambridgesu.co.uk. Your BME Officer can set up an appointment on your behalf and accompany you to meetings with the Advice Service, with your permission.

- The Office for Student Conduct, Complaints & Appeals

OSCCA oversees the University's student discipline procedures - e.g. those relating to harassment and misconduct (which racism falls under). There are a number of different procedures, which are explained and compared in Loud & Clear's Guide (pp. 18 onwards). In all cases, we advise you to speak with the Advice Service before you make a decision about whether to report and seek wellbeing and welfare support alongside reporting, as the process can be difficult and distressing.

BEING BME: SUPPORT

- End Everyday Racism

End Everyday Racism is a research project which is based at the Sociology Department. Through its reporting tool, it collects testimonies and eyewitness accounts of 'everyday racism' (everything from microaggressions to outright assault) in order to better understand how racism is experienced on a daily basis by BME students and staff at the University, and produce evidence-based recommendations for change. Whilst EER is not a formal reporting tool, the data it collects provides vital evidence to advocate for change, and allows for students and staff to document the racism they encounter on a daily basis.

- The BME Campaign

Of course, you can reach out to the BME Campaign whenever you need support or advice. We also run Forums throughout term. Anyone who self-identifies as BME is welcome to come attend to raise concerns, hold elected committee members to account, and get involved in campaigns for change. For BME reps, these will be a great space to share what you've been up to and what difficulties you've been facing in your college, share skills and advice, and coordinate campaigns with others.

SUBJECT GUIDES

ANGLO-SAXON, NORSE & CELTIC

"As an ASNaC, your timetable isn't overly heavy as far as contact hours go, however, there is always work to be doing outside of lectures: typically one essay per week in first year and depending on how many language modules you choose to take, at least one set of translations to be doing each week. It works out quite nicely because you are able to organise your own time, and fit extra-curricular activities around it. For example, you could choose to be on the editorial team for a student newspaper, or appear in a play, and still have plenty of time to get the work done. Obviously, the work is challenging and can take up a lot of time, but you're free to choose when you want to put the hours in. A typical workload will involve roughly one essay per week, and at least one set of translations each week (or more, depending on how many language modules you choose to take). The essays are normally supervised on a one-to-one basis every week, and revision supervisions are offered in the run-up to exams should you feel the need for them. Outside of this, there are lectures (for which there is often pre-lecture reading), language classes, and the occasional workshop - for example, the Scandinavian history class gets an archaeology workshop in which they are able to handle a range of Viking weapon and artefacts"

–Tonicha, Newnham

TIPS FROM CURRENT STUDENTS

Did you initially struggle with anything? If so, how did you overcome it?

- Change in pace of the work was a big shock, however supervisors are really considerate and help you adjust to this slowly by being more flexible. I tried different methods of reading and note-taking to see which was more effective for me.

What are your tips for making the most out of teaching?

- Review notes after the class to make sure they make sense and that you didn't miss out any key information while the class is still fresh in your mind. Ask questions if you have any!
- Share notes! Be kind and work together.

What are some of your essay writing tips?

- Don't make more notes than you have to, if you write every little thing you read down it will really slow you down. Colour coordinating my notes into topics for paragraphs also helped me make a visual plan.
- Read, note as you go, plan, and remember - don't be afraid to leave things out.

Do you have tips for students who are nervous about supervision?

- Don't be afraid to say you don't know or understand something, as you'll get more out of the supervision than if you parented you know what's going on. Equally if you have something to say, then say it because supervisors don't want to be the only ones talking. They're honestly incredibly friendly in ASNC. If you've done the reading for the essay you'll be fine!

"There's a massive array of modules (we call them papers to choose from) - in first year I did biological anthropology and social anthropology, in second year I took archaeological science, and european prehistory, then in final year I took archaeological science part II, the Indus civilisation, and also did a dissertation (a 10,000 word research project). For each paper we had about 2 hours of lectures a week, and for science we also had practicals and seminars (classes where we discussed set readings). In terms of work I had about 4 essays per term and two supervisions a week. Usually we'd be given a couple of essay titles which we could choose from, and a reading list for each title. We did have some coursework - for each of the period papers (prehistory and Indus) I did an artefact project, where we researched an artefact in the museum, and for science we had to do a lab project and keep a lab book. Most examinations though were through end of year exams. The course has however just changed, so things might be slightly different from my experience. In terms of resources the Haddon Library has most things, and you can download most of the articles you need from the university's library search website."

–Emma, Peterhouse

TIPS FROM CURRENT STUDENTS

Did you initially struggle with anything? If so, how did you overcome it?

- I often struggled with the fast pace of some lectures and figuring out essay responses. I realised that it's okay to ask for help if I do not know what's going on.

What are your tips for making the most out of teaching?

- Pay attention. Take detailed and concise notes. Collect all your notes in one area so its easier to refer back to. Always have a water bottle.

What are some of your essay writing tips?

- Always have a detailed plan before you write; it makes things so much easier. Choose your quotes wisely. Stick to the question. Always refer back to what the question is asking so don't go off on a tangent. It's much better to be considered then bloated.

Do you have tips for students who are nervous about supervision?

- Always read your essays beforehand. Be ready with questions to ask. Don't be nervous to clarify if you don't know something. And read the recommended materials. Know what's going on in the lectures.

ARCHITECTURE

"The course is fairly time consuming and for us we spent a lot of time in the studio. You may feel slightly lost as it is a subject that most people will not have studied before coming to university. There is a lot to learn and you can learn a lot just by talking to other people in your year and across the years. There's people with many areas of expertise whether that be your lecturers or older students so it's useful to check out other crits and ask questions when you're interested in something."

–Lalia, King's

"The course is not easy by any means and I've been stretched more than ever before. But in no way can I underestimate the force for good its been in my life at Cambridge. The people I have met through my course are gems. Always there to rely on, and with a course that requires a lot of long hours its the people by your side that help. It's unlike any other Cambridge course in its style, structure, and size so can be alienating at times. but if I could go back and tell fresher me something it would be to trust those mad people you meet on the first day in the studio. They'll teach you more than books can. I would also say that essays? They are so incredibly interesting so don't judge a lecture series by its (way too long) title."

–Precious, Gonville and Caius

TIPS FROM CURRENT STUDENTS

Did you initially struggle with anything? If so, how did you overcome it?

- In architecture the things you learn are basically all new so it was difficult to adjust, but overall if you ask for help from your DOS or Tutor I solved my issues.
- Architecture as a whole is a very subjective course. There is very little right or wrong, so often when you come from prescriptive a-levels its often very difficult to get used to the nature of the course. Everyone goes through this - the constant feeling of not quite getting anything perfect. The best way to do deal with this is by talking with fellow students, your DOS and Tutor, and the ARCSOC welfare/BME/access officers. We'll have been through it in one way or another. Time and acclimatisation to the course is a massive help but there are always people to chat with as well.
- Time management. Between lectures and studio work and supervisions, I struggled with finding a balance and keeping ahead of the work. The thing is these things are actually not balanced (with studio being 60% and lecture-based exams accounting for 40%) so it was just really just playing it by ear and prioritising a certain element depending on the week and the deadlines. Obviously they're all very important elements of the course but you'll find that some weeks require more attention to supervisions/lectures than studio work (although studio work is constantly looming) and you'll just have to take that leap of sacrifice. It also took realising that I could not actually be on top of everything at the same time - that's the number one lesson, I think.

ARCHITECTURE

What are your tips for making the most out of teaching?

- Staying after lectures and asking questions to the lecturers, if there's time and especially if you feel uncomfortable asking in front of so many people then that can be a good option. Writing down any questions that you have and following up on any topics that you found interesting.
- Firstly... go to them. History and theories are a never-miss. Always record them for yourselves they are so useful to listen back to and allows you some more space to fully absorb the lecture then and there.
- One thing i found useful for lectures was recording them. It took up memory space but it also meant that there was something I could fall back on if I wanted to clear some things in my notes (especially for the times when my handwriting was not legible). I wouldn't say one should totally depend on them but it doesn't hurt to have a backup.

Do you have any tips for students who are nervous about supervisions?

- Just know that it's a conversation and the supervisor is not there to judge you or make you feel stupid but to help you learn. Tbh is fact is easier for me to say than to remember in supervisions but you can always reach out to your Tutor if you are very nervous about supervisions. Sometimes the topic can be set beforehand so as long as you can complete that work there's not much to worry about.
- All architecture supervisions are pretty chill, you'll normally be with someone else too. It's easy to just say "don't overthink it" but there is not too much to stress about. Each supervision is very different! So do the work for it and it will work out. Push your understanding as far as you can and ask for help for the bits you don't.
- For supervisions, I would say if you're overwhelmed by the amount of reading material or you're particularly swamped with studio that week - then just specialise and focus on one reading material. Knowing one material very well is better than just spouting off half-developed fragments from other readings because when the questions come out, it's always hard to defend what you know little of.

Are there any books or resources that you recommend for students new to the course?

- I read a book called Chain Reaction, about architecture and public health and well-being which helped me to broaden the spectrum of how I thought about architecture. There's always talks to attend if you look on the RIBA website and many of the architecture summer exhibitions were online this year so there's many you can check out. Also following Instagram pages of architecture schools helps with some inspiration.
- Modern Architecture since 1900 by William Curtis and Modern Architecture - a critical history by Frampton. You'll need both of these for histories and theories!
- It's pretty difficult to prepare for the course but I would say Story of Architecture by Johnathan Glancey was and Architecture since 1900 by William Curtis are a good start.

ARCHITECTURE

Any other tips?

- Remember that in terms of architecture, it's rare that anyone will have studied it before. It's normal to feel confused or to not know what you're really doing but you're there for a reason and there's so much to learn surrounded by lots of other creatives. Everyone there has a passion for architecture in one way or another so try and absorb as much as you can, not just from briefs and lectures but from the people around you as well.
- Practice sketching from real-life observation! :)
- Drop the older years a message. Because of COVID-19 you may see us in person less, but know that we would all love to hear from you, how you're doing, and anything else!

ASIAN & MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES

"The great thing about AMES is that the whole faculty focuses on NOT studying Europe. Lots of things we read are from writers and academics of colour, and the faculty consciously tries not to look at cultures through an Orientalist lens. This makes the faculty unique and separate from the MML department. Studying the language is the most interesting part for me, but there is such a breadth of cultural modules to take - AMES truly is a multidisciplinary degree!"

–Sawen, Peterhouse

TIPS FROM CURRENT STUDENTS

Did you initially struggle with anything? If so, how did you overcome it?

- I struggled with the intensity to begin with. Lots of contact hours, and very fast movement through the content. It took me a while to realise that I didn't need to know absolutely everything - they were definitely overloading us with extra information and it's not like A Level content where you need to know absolutely everything on the syllabus in depth.

What are your tips for making the most out of teaching?

- Try to be as organised as possible. Do your work in advance so that you can schedule in all your extracurriculars without any issues.

Do you have tips for students who are nervous about supervision?

- Prepare for your supervisions way in advance. Two days early at least. Give yourself a few hours to really be ready for anything in the supo. It's intense but you'll spot your improvements quite quickly.

CLASSICS

"Classics is one of the broadest humanities subjects you will find at Cambridge - spanning over hundreds of years, two ancient languages (that are by no means dead), and modules in history, philosophy, art, archaeology and even linguistics! What I've enjoyed most about the course so far is the satisfaction of going from no Greek at all to being able to read the works of Homer and Plato (with a lot of contact hours I must add). Yet it is clear that Classics is still lacking in BME representation in its faculty, inclusivity of students from low-income households and willingness to have a conversation about decolonising the curriculum - but as representation amongst its students grows slowly every year, so will the pressure to change for the better!"

–Vidya, Downing

TIPS FROM CURRENT STUDENTS

Did you initially struggle with anything? If so, how did you overcome it?

- Greek from scratch was very overwhelming with the high number of contact hours, but consistently doing the preparation helped with gaining momentum and confidence when it came to unseen translation.
- Knowing whether essays were answering the question or any good is something that also comes with confidence in your own research.

What are your tips for making the most out of teaching?

- Making note of grammar that you are unsure of - whether Latin or Greek - is useful in the long run. For lectures, organising your online notes in the caucuses from the get go would help with revision. Keeping research and reading notes from your essays for revision too.

What are some of your essay writing tips?

- I always make a running document of the notes and quotes from the reading I find and then make a plan from that to keep myself on track and structure the essay. I then copy and paste what I want from the notes document to the essay plan doc and stitch it all together. I find this easier to complete than free-styling completely since getting lost or writers' block is even more frustrating.

Do you have tips for students who are nervous about supervision?

- Being the only POC in all my supervisions was something that played on my mind at the start - I wouldn't speak as much, I'd feel extremely conscious when saying Latin or Greek in fear of my East London accent being corrected for pronunciation, and generally think my ideas were too basic to voice. But as I became closer to my supervision mates, voicing my opinions and questions became easier - as well as reviewing my essay and feedback before supervision making it a lot less daunting.

CLASSICS

Are there any books or resources that you recommend for students new to the course?

- Classical Literature by Richard Jenkyns helped give me an overview of authors and genres not taught in A-level. Reading the Iliad and Aeneid in A-level Class Civ helped with references in set texts.

Any other tips?

- Though there are few POC in Classics, we are always willing to give advice and support - so if you see us in the faculty library just come up to us and say hi (or slip us a note if we look stressed).

COMPUTER SCIENCE

"Computer Science has so far been a challenging but fun course. Part IA covers a very broad range of fundamental topics in CS, setting the foundations for the later years. The course also has a good mix of theoretical and practical modules, both of which I have found to be really useful when completing projects or using this knowledge in industry. Particular highlights would be functional programming and machine learning: the former took a while to get used to, but the switch of paradigm is great for enhancing problem-solving skills, while machine learning introduces you to some key concepts which will be used in the more grown-up Artificial Intelligence course in Part IB. The course isn't always easy, but there is plenty of support to be found in supervisors, directors of studies and fellow classmates."

–Victoria, Jesus

TIPS FROM CURRENT STUDENTS

Did you initially struggle with anything? If so, how did you overcome it?

- A lot of topics may seem unfamiliar after lectures, but make the most of supervision work, suggested reading and supervisions. For the courses with less content, e.g. discrete mathematics or digital electronics, practice is key - using past paper questions to consolidate your knowledge is particularly effective. There are often mark schemes so you have solutions once you've had an attempt. Also, don't be afraid to ask questions to supervisors: that's what they're there for!

What are your tips for making the most out of teaching?

- Make sure you're prepared for lectures: have your notes on you either physically or online, so you can annotate them as you go along. If you have time, have a look over the content of the lecture before it actually happens - this will help you to follow along better. As lectures will be online, there's the added benefit of being able to pause and play, so you can go over the lecture as many times as you want. Make notes of explanations of concepts you didn't grasp the first time, so that you have an easy reference when it comes to supervision work/revision.

Do you have any tips for students who are nervous about supervisions?

- It's important to remember that they exist for your benefit. Always strive to complete as much of the supervision work as possible to get feedback from your supervisor. If you are ever struggling with workload, you can always tell your supervisor and/or your director of studies - they are very understanding about this. Before the supervision, look over the questions you answered (it's all too common to forget the work you did by the time the supervision comes around) and highlight in the notes/supervision work concepts you don't understand that you can bring up with the supervisor. The more specific your questions, the more directed your help will be, so it's worth pinpointing where you lack understanding.

COMPUTER SCIENCE

Are there any books or resources that you recommend for students new to the course?

- For OCaml, I would recommend "OCaml from the very beginning". For Discrete Mathematics, I would recommend "How to think like a mathematician" and "Discrete Mathematics and its Applications" by Kevin Houston and Kenneth Rosen respectively. Otherwise, the reading recommended on the course pages is a good place to start.

Any other tips?

- Discuss work with your peers - this not only means you can help each other on things you might not understand, but it also is a great stress buster. It also helps to know you're not the only one finding things difficult or intense at times!

ECONOMICS

"Economics is a challenging and varied discipline that may seem daunting to begin with. In first year, you will have 5 papers: Micro, Macro, Maths and Stats (together), Politics, and History. The first 3 papers will give you the mechanics behind the models, whilst the last two papers give you the context with which to apply them. You'll have essays for politics and history, but mainly problem sheets for micro, macro and maths. Everything in first year may seem a bit abstract, however you get to apply these skills in optional papers later on."

–Kiran, St Catharine's

TIPS FROM CURRENT STUDENTS

Did you initially struggle with anything? If so, how did you overcome it?

- I found supervision questions really weird since I hadn't seen stuff like it before, but I think it's just something you get used to over time.
- I struggled with the way of thinking in macro. It seemed very abstract and I couldn't make sense of the models. I went through the textbooks to fix this. The first supervision is always a shock, but after a while I started to get used to them and the textbook helped me think in that way.
- I initially struggled with the essay papers as I hadn't studied History since year 9 and had never had a Politics lesson. I overcame this by going to essay workshops. As term progressed I got better at completing reading lists and managing my time.

What are your tips for making the most out of teaching?

- Annotate the lecture notes. Even if you don't remember everything, make sure that you are following everything.
- As you go through the lectures write down every question that comes to mind on a separate sheet of paper/google doc. After the lecture see if you can answer them with your lecture notes, textbooks/reading or the internet. If not, these are good questions to take to your lecturers office hours.

What are your essay writing tips?

- For economics specifically, do the required reading already knowing which type of information you are trying to find, as this will make the process faster.
- Have a very clear structure and set that out from the introduction. Put your arguments in order from strongest first to weakest last and critique them directly after.
- Before you start anything find the crux of the question and try to write it out in layman's terms. As you're reading books it will be a lot easier to find points that are relevant. I also like to get my computer to read my essay aloud to me while I am editing to make it easier to find mistakes and arguments that aren't as solid. Also make sure you have a mini introduction and conclusion in each paragraph. If you are struggling your college should offer some writing workshops at the beginning of the year.

ECONOMICS

Do you have tips for students who are nervous about supervisions?

- If you have questions which you don't feel are covered in lectures/course notes be sure to ask them. It's an opportunity to cover anything you're confused about.
- The supervisors are there to help you. Don't worry about getting it wrong.
- The best way to prepare is to look over the work that you submitted before the supervision. If you struggled on any questions in a problem sheet or any concept in one of your essays, it's nice to talk to your course mates about it before the supo.

EDUCATION

"I didn't know exactly what to expect when I started my course, but the best thing about Education for me is the interdisciplinary approach that is taken to explore such a complex issue. Studying my course has allowed me to think about education in so many different ways and I've particularly enjoyed the sociological lens that I've been allowed to take to my study. It isn't the most well-known or common degree choice, but I'm so happy I took the leap to apply. I couldn't imagine studying anything else."

–Tyra, Fitzwilliam

TIPS FROM CURRENT STUDENTS

Did you initially struggle with anything? If so, how did you overcome it?

- YES - When I was struggling in first-year I reminded myself that there is a reason why the course is 3 years in duration. - You are not supposed to be excellent right away. Academic reading! Focus on key points first and skip less relevant sections, come back to them later once I have a grasp of the main aspects

What are your tips for making the most out of teaching?

- If you're given a reading list before lectures, attempt to dip into it, but if you don't it's not the end of the world.

What are some of your essay writing tips?

- Take breaks and try to recognise the essays are processes of learning rather than the outcome. Don't be afraid to make a point and build an argument; try to be nuanced but don't be afraid of making somewhat bold statements.

Do you have tips for students who are nervous about supervision?

- Think about supervisions like chats in which you're developing your knowledge rather than concluding on facts or information.
- Remember that your supervisors are people, too! Be open about things you don't (yet) understand/know - that'll make it easier for them to teach you appropriately.

Are there any books or reading that you recommend?

- I'd recommend reading 'Outliers' by Malcolm Gladwell. Its casual tone makes it easy to read as it explores societal expectations and beliefs about success and education.

Any other tips?

- If you're entering a predominately white educational environment know that you're supposed to be there, and it doesn't fall upon you to prove it to your peers or lecturers.
- Remember every student is different! What works for your peers doesn't have to work for you. Also, don't assume that everyone tells the truth re how well they understand sth, how much time they spend working etc and don't compare yourself to others!

ENGINEERING

"I applied for the Cambridge Engineering course as when I was in Year 13, I wasn't too sure which kind of Engineering I wanted to specialise in. I had broad interests in Design Engineering and Sustainable Development Engineering so thought this course would be useful in helping me develop a strong broad-based knowledge base before specialisation. This means that the course can be quite full-on at times as you essentially do five-degrees in one but it is interesting to see the skills you develop along the way and how this fits into real-world engineering. The course is also very theoretical and prescriptive (you have little choice about what you do) in the first two years so if you're like me and are a very project-based engineer who likes to design and make things I would definitely recommend getting stuck into some of the Engineering societies such as Robotics, 3D Printing, Eco-racing or Synthetic Biology. The Dyson Centre is also an amazing resource if you want to do personal projects and there are funds that exist to help with that so make the most of it if that is what you'll enjoy doing. And if you've had enough of Engineering from lectures and supervisions and don't want to do anymore, there are plenty of other ways to catch a break such as Hip-hop Soc, ACS or the getting involved in the Cambridge Theatre Scene."

–Tse, St Catharine's

TIPS FROM CURRENT STUDENTS

Did you initially struggle with anything? If so, how did you overcome it?

- YES, it was a mess. I think the approach taught at A-Level to solving problems is sometimes different from approaches used in uni. Some of the concepts are also quite hard to wrap one's head around. I think it depends on what kind of learner you are and what would work best for you. I learn through talking things through so finding friends to explain things to me and ask them questions was useful for me.
- Also, you can ask your supervisors for additional supervisions. I would also say not to beat yourself up too much about not understanding all of the content immediately.
- For me doing past paper questions also helped me understand what I had learnt in lectures in the context of exams.
- Deadlines and the workload: have a set timetable in your day as to when you're working and when you're chilling. I used to work 9am-7pm every day. That way, after 7pm I could chill and relax, knowing I'd done enough for the day. I would meet people, do society stuff etc. Work was for the day, chill was the nights. I would do some coursework tasks e.g. drawings, coding after 9pm if I had to, but the more difficult stuff like examples sheets or lecture note taking, I'd do in the day.
- Don't work for supo deadlines if you can avoid it. It's slow and builds up super quickly. I worked on example sheets as soon as I could do the questions. That way I would do 6-7 questions per day, only the things covered by the day's lectures. That way I don't have to zoom through the example sheet the day before the supo. Sometimes you may have 3 or 4+ supos a week so this way you stay on top of everything and don't fall behind!

ENGINEERING

- In first year I didn't do as well as I wanted in exams so in hindsight I should have worked more consistently in the year. I never worked enough at the start of Mich/Lent because the workload was always deceptively quite light. However, around week 4 the work suddenly built up and then I fell behind really quickly because I hadn't really understood the early lectures. So I guess I would advise people to start working and understanding lecture notes, even if it seems easy at the start.
- That said, for many people this might not be realistic (even in 4th year I still fell behind) but you can catch up on a lot in the holidays. I think material also tends to be easier to cover in the holidays because you have already seen it once before.
- The biggest difference for me was using Anki (free spaced repetition flashcard software - Google it) in my 2nd year. I'm someone who really struggles to revise effectively but Anki completely changed my academic performance. Anki is basically like a more powerful version of flashcards and it helped me memorise most of my entire second year lecture notes.

What are your tips for making the most of teaching?

- I know it sounds nerdy but pre-reading lecture notes help. I also like physically going to lectures and sitting with friends I feel comfortable with so if I have a quick question I ask them (but some people may not like this as they may feel they get distracted if sitting with friends so just do what works for you).
- Then reading over the content after the lectures to consolidate the content as well as doing example paper questions as you go through the content rather than the night before the supervision where everything is forced and nothing really registers.
- For labs I cannot stress this enough - Don't stress too hard about lab reports etc as it is literally just standard credit. Some people are keen to understand what happens in labs which is fine. To help with this pre-read the lab handouts and ask the demonstrators any questions you have but spending ages on lab stuff after the lab you will come to realise may not be the best use of time. Understanding the content of labs is useful for the course as a whole but understanding the lab does not mean having a ten out of the lab report. Understand the lab and finish the lab report quickly (and accurately). If you're really stuck on writing lab reports ask to see examples of your friends etc but keep the time spent on lab reports minimal.
- Don't worry about practicals and write ups. For the first 2 years it's standard credit, so as long as you turn up and do the bare minimum in terms of lab reports, you'll be fine.
- Try and finish the coursework as soon as you can, the coding and computer aided drawing can take ages to set up so get it done early! But also don't spend too much time on them, ask for help if you need it! You don't wanna be up till 5am the night before its due, its hella stressful and easily avoidable with good time management and if you start it as soon as you can.

ENGINEERING

- Focus mainly on lectures and example sheets. Coursework and labs aren't that important, as long as you give them a go you'll get the marks. The first 2 years are all about learning content for exams. Revise where you can over the holidays but make sure to chill and relax as well! Don't burn out! You can always ask your DoS for extra supervisions if you don't understand a topic, but people in depth and your friends will always be around to help you as well if you need it.
- TAKE BREAKS AND ASK FOR HELP IF YOU NEED IT!
- The biggest thing that helped me was 'working as team' with the other engineers in college. If someone missed a lecture, we always made sure to get them handouts or try and sign them in if they were late to a lab etc. This was good for morale and was nice because you always knew other people had your back. It was also really useful for supervisions if you were stuck on a question or hadn't done the work. Other colleges were very competitive between their engineers and it looked much more stressful.
- Similar to this, making friends in the year above helped a lot because you can always go to them for advice when you get stuck.

Do you have tips for students who are nervous about supervisions?

- When doing example papers if you have any questions write them down either on a separate sheet of paper or on your problem/solution sheet so you can question it in supervision. You'll think you'll remember the question but trust me you won't. If you have a lot of questions perhaps ask a friend to go through some stuff with you beforehand as the hour can sometimes go quickly in the supervision so you might not be able to go through everything.
- It's hard to say for all supervisors because I guess they are all different but I would say you get as much out of the supervision as you put in. Do the work you need for that supervision as opposed to bluffing your way through it.
- Ask all your questions no matter how dumb you think it is. I used to be so scared I would ask a very dumb question or my supervisors won't understand me because of my 'slang' but at this point, they've even picked up a few of the terms themselves lol. You aren't supposed to know everything that's why you are a student and not a professor.
- Make sure you've gone over the questions properly. It's totally fine if you don't know how to answer the questions, that's the point of supos! They're there to help you, if you know it all then there's no point to them!
- Be prepared for them though, if you don't have any questions for the supervisors then it's a waste of an hour and it's a bit stressful. If you've fallen behind with work, they won't mind at all, they understand. For some subjects like materials, if you are falling behind you can just read the whole example sheet and not answer the questions, as long as you know what you're struggling with you can discuss it, but only do this if you've fallen behind.

ENGINEERING

- I spent most of my time coxing in first year so often struggled to complete examples papers in time for supervisions. I got round this by faking my way through most supervisions (volunteering to talk through easy solutions so I wasn't asked about the harder ones, asking lots of broader theory questions to avoid answering questions) - I don't recommend this. In hindsight, I wished I had approached supervisions as an opportunity rather than a chore.
- I appreciated supervisions more in older years. There are so few places you can get 2-2-1 contact time so I think it's worth making the most of them. In older years, I spent more time thinking about the material beforehand and thought up interesting questions to discuss beforehand. Supervisions are such a good chance to become better at critical thinking and practice communicating complex ideas.

Any other tips?

- Always be down to ask for help from friends (find friends who don't mind this), older students, supervisors, lecturers etc.
- Also make sure you're happy outside of the course as well e.g. socially, mentally, physically etc as that's when you'll find the course most tolerable and perhaps even enjoyable - but that might be a push ;).
- If you feel weird in the department, like you don't fit in etc, I did as well, feel free to reach out to the CUES Diversity Officer who's super friendly and honestly wants nothing but the best for you and to see you thrive. She'll be down to help out always.
- Time management is key. Make sure to take breaks, look after yourself. Drink lots of water, eat healthily. Ask for help if you need it. Enjoy your holidays, revise but don't stress about mocks. Make sure to have time to relax, meet people, do things and have fun! Cambridge is very intense, enjoy it!
- Despite everything I've said above, I don't really regret the time I spent in first year prioritising hobbies over academics. A lot of people seemed to burn out towards the end of Cambridge but I think I enjoyed studying much more in later years because I felt like I had already done lots of my 'extracurricular bucket list' in first year.

ENGLISH

"What I truly love about my degree is the versatility. I love that, despite centering around quite old texts, literature expands into so many different aspects of life, social, political and otherwise, meaning there are so many ways one text can be viewed and examined"

–Trisha, Robinson

TIPS FROM CURRENT STUDENTS

Did you initially struggle with anything? If so, how did you overcome it?

- Yes! I found that following a decolonial approach to my education spoke to my heart more.
- Initially my biggest struggle was the essay writing and to be honest I didn't really find my stride until the end of final term. Basically, I latched onto the positive comments and did my best to repeat those things and really listen to the constructive comments, like have the previous weeks' constructive comments up whilst I would write that week's essay, making sure not to repeat the same errors.

What are your tips for making the most out of teaching?

- Challenge assumptions, don't adhere to everything just because your supervisor thinks it's right and find your own way of making the subject feel more relatable.
- Go to all lectures in the start, then quit the ones that don't provide information you find interesting/relevant. For seminars, try your best to note down what others say, as those different views can often open up a path of thinking you might not have otherwise considered. Also, do the seminar prep!

What are some of your essay writing tips?

- Always plan your essay around a specific core idea, rather than many disparate ideas. Plan before writing, even if it's a quick plan. I found that mind maps worked best for me. (Can confirm that being more organised helped me get a First.)
- My biggest advice is don't feel forced to write in a voice that isn't your own, for fear that your voice isn't academic enough. Also, ensure that you analyse the hell out of whatever text(s) you're examining.

Do you have tips for students who are nervous about supervisions?

- Don't take everything to heart, you will definitely be misunderstood and attacked at times.
- Be assured and confident in your voice! What you have to say is just as important and valid as the perspective of others.

Are there any books or resources that you recommend for students new to the course?

- The Postcolonial Studies Reader; The Poetry Handbook (for technical stuff); reading lists prepared by the Decolonise English group.

ENGLISH

Any other tips?

- Try not to be nervous and be prepared to read. A lot.
- If you find yourself struggling, don't be scared to email your DOS or supervisors for extensions or asking to hand in essay plans instead of full essays. Remember that your health always comes first.
- Middle English can be difficult, but focus on being able to translate the sections you'll need to for your Prelims, rather than learning the whole language from scratch.
- If you'd like to attend any lectures that aren't related to what you're studying (and you have the time), check the lecture lists to see what might be interesting to you.

GEOGRAPHY

"The course is very interesting and has a wide breadth of topics in first year that span both human and physical geography. I particularly enjoyed the Cultural Geography course in first year and the Citizenship and Societies course in second year which touches on Race, Migration and Citizenship in the UK from the early 20th century to the modern day. My advice to first years is that I'd recommend collaborating and working with other Geographers where you can in your year as well as getting advice on academic skills from the Geographers in the year above. The people I have met in the department have been lovely and friendly which makes collaborating with them great! Focus on academic work and get help when you need it but also get involved with different social activities (there are over 800 different societies in Cambridge to choose from). I was the Queens' College Black, Asian, Minority Officer on the JCR during my first and second year at university and organised an intercollegiate cultural formal at Clare College which was a night of thought-provoking speakers and beautiful live performances. I invited the Head of the Geography department, Professor Bhaskar Vira to speak at the event and he shared his words of wisdom, the night was truly unforgettable and definitely one of my highlights of second year. To people from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds I would say: definitely never let your background stop you. If you let your background stand in your way, you might not be able to achieve the things you really want and are passionate about and instead might settle for less - you deserve more and you can do more! Always tap into any good support networks available to you, whether that be the Academics you meet at university, your friends or family members who believe in you and are advocates for your success. Having a good support network has always really helped me."

–Victoria, Queens'

TIPS FROM CURRENT STUDENTS

Did you initially struggle with anything? If so, how did you overcome it?

- I'm lucky that my department (Geography) is on the whole very understanding and when I felt overwhelmed with work particularly in Lent term, I was able to hand in essay plans instead.. Don't spend all your time and energy on supervision work (a few 'bad' grades aren't the end of the world).
- I struggled with the workload. At first I aimed to hand write notes in lectures, then type them up after but this proved infeasible for me, and I moved to typing then directly. Talking to others on my course was a huge help as everybody had similar reactions to the work and tricky topics; my classmates were fantastic support.

What are your tips for making the most out of teaching?

- Don't stress about getting every single word of the lecture down, even if the PowerPoint/lecture notes are sparse. I found that I didn't actually use my lecture notes too much when revising/writing essays -reading notes were a lot more helpful. Lectures were more for getting a very basic understanding of a specific topic.
- Attend all your lectures and have lecture buddies you walk/cycle with - this will really motivate you on cold mornings when you might otherwise be tempted to stay in bed!

GEOGRAPHY

- If you can, divide up some reading lists or book chapters between friends on your course and compile notes on a Google doc. This will reduce your workload and explaining your section to others is a good way to learn it better.

Do you have any tips for students who are nervous about supervisions?

- If you've not really experienced that environment you could practice discussing subject-related things that interest you with your family or friends before term starts. Supervisors are generally lovely and often spend a lot of the sessions teaching and explaining things to you so try not to be nervous, the pressure really is not on you.

Any other tips?

- Don't worry about every module across physical and human geography because of the way the exams are structured. Also prioritise coursework over supervision essays. Your coursework deadlines don't move, and they matter towards your final first year grade. Coursework is a lot more important.
- On the reading list, read something that hasn't been mentioned in your lectures as it will give you alternative points to make in your essays. Branch out of just using lecture readings.
- Don't be afraid to ask your DOS or supervisors for help with concepts, especially in human geography. There's a lot of key concepts and terms that need to be understood (e.g. neoliberalism, suburbanisation).
- Attend lectures on modules you find interesting. Lecture notes are better than slides. And don't be scared to email your lecturers with questions you may have.

"HSPS is a course where you can explore the same phenomenon using different lenses. For example you can study gender in politics, anthropology, sociology and international relations. This allows you to build a holistic understanding of these phenomena and in different contexts. I really enjoy when the topics overlap like this because it allows you to really explore different topics in depth and discover things you would have never considered. I particularly enjoyed exploring the topic of race using these various analytical lenses and being exposed to Black sociological thinkers such as W.E.B Du Bois."

–Tami, Fitzwilliam

TIPS FROM CURRENT STUDENTS

Did you initially struggle with anything? If so, how did you overcome it?

- Bringing originality into your work in Cambridge is difficult, especially when the reading lists for humanities subjects are so extensive. To overcome this, try and link your own reading to topics studied, or think about a personal perspective from which to critique and analyse even more generic reading material.
- Long reading lists can be extremely overwhelming and it's not always useful to read everything on the list, look at the key chapters of a few core books then get "nuggets" of information from book reviews (can be found online idiscover) if you don't have time to read whole secondary readings. Wikipedia and Sparknotes are fine as long as you don't quote directly from there.

What are your tips for making the most out of teaching?

- For HSPS, work out quickly what topics you wish to answer on the paper. For those you chose, go the extra mile in your work so you are as prepared as possible. For those topics that you chose not to study, don't worry about doing this extra work - however I would recommend still attending the lecture. It is really nice to be able to sit there, without taking copious notes and just enjoy learning about new theorists and perspectives, without the pressure of examinations.
- Listen instead of copying down everything you hear.
- Use google docs online instead of word so notes are accessible on multiple platforms.
- Save powerpoint presentations and have them up on your screen.
- Leave behind quick clues or comments in your notes like "look this up this is interesting" "didn't fully get this" "unfinished, look over later!" This will help you a lot when you are reviewing your notes.

What are some of your essay writing tips?

- Firstly, do not be overwhelmed by reading, a lot is expected of you, but it is worth it - so do not be afraid to dedicate an entire day just for reading. An informed essay written quickly is usually better than one that you spend hours deliberating over, without the stimulus of other points of view.

- Secondly, plan - really think about your argument, not only its content but its coherence. Try to ensure that you are linking your reading at all times.
- Thirdly, make sure that you entertain opposing arguments, even if you go on to oppose later within your work. Arguing persuasively for your side is insufficient, you must also prove why someone who holds the opposite view is wrong.
- Fourthly, try to reference as you go, this is a hard habit to form, but saves you the stress of having to re-find sources, or the specific page for the quote you used.
- Save your intro for last ALWAYS as then you can clearly state where your essay is going.
- If you're on a tight deadline and have e.g only written half the essay write the rest of the paragraphs in bullet points; most supervisors understand and don't mind-reference as you go along don't leave it to the end.
- Be critical of your texts and sources, why are they important, why are they wrong.
- Proof read! clarity is so important not doing this can seriously bring down a paper.

Do you have tips for students who are nervous about supervision?

- Take a deep breath. Know that rationally you will be ok and remind yourself of these three things: Number one, you deserve to be here. Number two, no one is denying some supervisors are intimidating, but they were once in your shoes, starting out in their undergraduate degree. Number three, supervisors that 'push you' will only do this because they believe you are capable of meeting their challenge (not necessarily that they disagree with your argument) thus, take it as an indication of your ability.
- Have some points from your essay summarised on your page that you'll be taking notes on just to prompt you-bring questions, this can take the focus off you for a bit while the supervisor explains-don't be scared to say you don't know, the point is to learn and discuss it's not a test- supervisions are a place to explore ideas further so even if you didn't think it was important enough to include in your essay say it in the supervision, more of often than not it leads to interesting discussions

Any other tips?

- I recommend having different notebooks for each paper, make a calendar for the 8 week term and put it on your wall so that you can visually see how far supervisions are from each other which weeks yours deadlines are or your free days are.

HISTORY

"For me, History has been a subject that holds an endless reservoir of potential. The past touches every corner of the globe, every community and every family, hence when I came to Cambridge I was ready to see the world in a new way. In your first year I had to choose a European and two British papers, which, at first, did not fill me with joy. Despite all the odds, ancient Rome and the industrial revolution had its own mysteries to offer. Over the course of the year, I have realised that the history tripos is yours for the taking: you are the one that writes those weekly essays and so you are the one that gets to decide where you take the question. Now that may not seem revelatory, but the minute you realise that you are the key to every door in history the subject truly comes alive. In October I am moving into second year and I cannot wait to hop over the pond to America and Asia, which I am sure will develop my understanding of the world's past, and more importantly the complex present."

–Roshni Parmar-Hill, History, Newnham

"Studying History and Modern Languages at Cambridge is quite the opportunity, not just because it is one of the few universities to offer it. But because of the passion and drive that both departments have to bring out the individual excellence in every student. Essentially, HML is the best of worlds. I was blessed with the opportunity to take up Spanish from scratch and with the support and care of the MML department, I've been able to acquire advanced skills and gain confidence in the language (I'll also get to travel to South America for the year hopefully!). Likewise, the History department have offered me courses that mean I never felt the need to silence my interests in African history for something more "traditional". If anything, I was grateful to be able to discuss my passion in depth with world class academics in the field. Though it is intense and challenging, Cambridge has really helped me anchor my confidence in my academic interests. My word of advice would just be to completely immerse yourself in both subjects as much as possible and be confident in your ability to do so. You have the space and resources to learn incredible things, as well as develop an array of skills. It will be a journey of being challenged, finding things you love, finding things you don't love so much. But it is an amazing opportunity to grow academically and also personally. I'm really excited to see the great things Cambridge has in store for you all."

–Saron, History and Modern Languages, Gonville and Caius

TIPS FROM CURRENT STUDENTS

Did you initially struggle with anything? If so, how did you overcome it?

- I found the pace of work a real step up from A-Level, but what has really helped me is knowing that I can break a week down into more focused chunks: so reading for 3 days, planning for 1 day and then writing/ editing for 2 days. This really worked!
- (1) In 1st year, I found it hard to express myself clearly in my essays. After the Summer break, I realised that it was mainly due to overthinking and poor planning. Leaving enough time for planning and writing is key for a good History essay. (2) Footnoting whilst writing my essays also made me lose flow within my paragraphs. Leave footnoting for after the end of an essay or don't do it at all (if you can get away with it.)

HISTORY

- Struggled with organising supos as my main college supervisor was awful and made me organise everything on my own with no support or advice. However, my German DoS was (and is) the most supportive academic figure I've had at Cambridge so far and instantly sent round emails on my behalf and made sure I could meet all my essay deadlines, he also kept in touch with me around twice a week to check I was okay.

What are your tips for making the most out of teaching?

- Showing up is a good start - but really, go and be present: type up your notes, ask questions in seminars, voice your opinions, and don't be afraid to go up to the lecturer at the end for advice.
- I handwrite my lecture notes, as I find it easier than typing. You don't have to go to every lecture as there is a lecture for every topic in each paper. Also remember that lectures don't always correspond with your weekly essay topics so don't worry if you don't understand a lecture completely. Normally lecture notes will simply help to guide you when you eventually write an essay on the same topic.
- Take notes of what the lecturer says and not what you see on the PowerPoint. You can always access the PowerPoint on Moodle but what a lecturer says is far more important. Also speak to your lecturer after the lecture to clarify anything you didn't understand and don't feel afraid to make them aware of your name or send them an email afterwards to ask for a follow-up question.

What are some of your essay writing tips?

- PLAN, PLAN AND PLAN! It is so important you know what you are writing about, and you believe in what you are writing. That makes you shine through.
- For History essays, it is best to always start your introduction with an overview of the historiographical debate and your overarching answer to the question. The essays are normally 2000+ words and max 3000 for the more demanding papers (e.g. 19&14). Be as clear as possible and make the most of your footnotes.
- My main writing tip is to do all of your reading in one go followed by all of your planning in one go followed by all of your writing. I find it far harder to take notes, plan and then write at the same time and I find it wastes a lot of time. It's much easier to know what you want to say, plan what you want to say then write it in one sitting and then send off the essay.

Do you have tips for students who are nervous about supervisions?

- I would recommend having some questions prepared, read through your essay before you go in and remember that they are there for YOU, they are literally there to see you progress, so make sure they do it - you have the power here!

HISTORY

- Since all History supervisions are 1-1, it is best to be as honest as possible with your supervisor. Don't be afraid to say that you don't know something and remember the development of ideas is more important than producing a stellar essay.
- If you're nervous about supervisions that's entirely normal. A good way to deal with them is to read over the essay that you submitted for your supervision one more time, then make sure you understand the reading that you did for the essay.
- Make sure you make a list of questions to ask a supervisor. Your supervisor isn't there to trick you out or scare you, your supervisor is there to support you and answer any questions you don't know so you can understand the topic even better.

Any other tips?

- Don't stress about not getting a first: the whole point is that you go on a journey and if you are already at the top, how could you ever make progress. And also, make sure that you don't over stress yourself, Cambridge has so much to offer outside of studies as well, so make sure you find the balance... And get enough sleep!
- Be very clear with your supervisors about your interests. Don't be afraid to say what topics you do and don't want to do.
- Always prioritise the topics you will do in the exam.

""I love that lots of the History of Art lectures happen in front of the artworks themselves, whether in the Fitzwilliam Museum or in Kettles Yard. Since it's such a small group of us, we all get to know each other really well, and learn a lot from each other. And, since it's a small department, it has responded to recommendations from the decolonise history of art group and is beginning to teach non-western art history and postcolonial theory, which is really exciting to see."

–Jess, Pembroke

TIPS FROM STUDENTS

Did you initially struggle with anything? If so, how did you overcome it?

- The course says that no prior knowledge is needed, but there is a lot of presumed knowledge, knowledge only really accessible to privately educated students (Latin, ancient history, history of art basics etc). This leads to a lot of imposter syndrome.
- 'I had been scared because I approached high school as a game that I could win and I didn't know the rules to this new game. I stopped feeling so lost when I realized that Cambridge isn't a game that you can hack; it's a learning process and no one ever masters it. I had NO idea how to read for an essay or how to write 2000 words in 1-2 days, but you kind of just...start. You do it because you have to and you find that you're more capable than you think. I actually think that being academically insecure is an advantage because no one knows what they're doing and it's better if you're conscious of that fact! If you can accept that feeling, you can better identify/avoid competitiveness, ask for help, and talk to your classmates until you all figure out what's going on! It's not easy because you'll be surrounded by some people who went to private schools and have unbounded confidence in speaking up in class, but you have to realize that it's just how they've been taught and you're all learning together. There are a lot of people from a lot of different backgrounds converging and—especially in HoA when there are 20-30 people in your year—you'll all get to know each other and end up on the same footing. Share your books, take pictures of useful chapters and put them on the groupchat, send notes to people who missed class, ask to exchange essays, be academically generous!
- There was a lot of assumed knowledge expected of the History of Art freshers- although I tried my best to play catch up where I could, eventually I understood that (A) coming from a state comprehensive where History of Art isn't really a common course to apply for, it wasn't really my fault that I didn't have the 'cultural capital' that the other students had and (B) lots of the other students who I thought had this assumed knowledge were also secretly in a similar situation too.

HISTORY OF ART

What are your tips for making the most out of teaching?

- There will be people who will contribute frequently and loudly in your group work/discussions... don't be intimidated by them, your ideas are every bit as important as theirs, even if you don't voice them... but if you can, do so, because people want to hear what you have to say (even if you've convinced yourself that they don't want to- someone will.)
- I like taking notes on a laptop (I use MS OneNotes but others use Word) because then they're searchable and you can add images. Ideally, after the lecture you would go through the powerpoint that the lecturer posted on Moodle and add screenshots of each slide to your notes, expanding on your thoughts or maybe Googling a bit if something wasn't clear or something was super interesting. I would end up adding images to my notes during the breaks because I never stayed on top of it and that's fine too! For seminars, I would electronically highlight and annotate the readings as PDFs and then type notes directly on the powerpoint (posted on Moodle beforehand) in a PDF reader. Use the seminar to ask questions if you have them but don't worry about coming prepared with something to say—it's a pretty casual environment.
- Don't worry so much about taking a load of notes about every detail during object classes, instead focus on actually looking at the object in front of you and taking in what the lecturer is saying

What are some of your essay writing tips?

- Proofread at least once; small typos are forgivable, but easily fixed with a quick read through of your essay. Establish a clear argument in your introduction through 'signposting'- writing "in this essay, I will..." may seem painful and awkward at first, but you'll figure out ways to phrase this more eloquently in your later essays.
- I start thinking about the essay topic on Thursday, get books and read a bit on Friday, do most of the reading on Saturday and try to make a (rough, like not even topic sentences) plan, do follow-up reading on Sunday to fill gaps or because I didn't get through enough on Saturday, plan in more detail and probably read more on Monday, and write on Tuesday. BUT I would often end up writing from 8am-2am on Wednesday when my essay was due Thursday morning. Things happen--I spend too long reading, I put off writing, I take two days to write sometimes, etc. I spend way longer writing than most people. But it's always okay. Even if you turn in an essay you hate, you still learned from the experience. It's all about practice and your essays don't have to be perfect—they just have to help you learn and sort out your thoughts.

- Write down questions as you read and use them to guide your argument. Ask yourself what the essay prompt excludes, what the literature leaves out, what controversies and gaps there are, etc.; this helps nuance your writing and sometimes allows you to step outside sometimes boring/rehearsed/Eurocentric literature. Also, try to structure your plan around 1-4 objects/buildings—don't be like me and include 14! Know that—especially in exam term—you can read things that are adjacent to the curriculum but less focused on elite white men. It's all about finding critical approaches that appeal to you, and—while the curriculum often pretends that race, gender, class, and imperialism are invisible—remember that no one has a monopoly over the objects they make or commission. How is Renaissance Italy embedded in global networks? How did the female servant who walked past Titian's Venus of Urbino every day feel about it? Who occupied the civic spaces created and policed by political elites, even if those spaces weren't intended for them? What are the racializing roots of architectural history and how does neoclassicism interact with imperialism?
- Plan !! Structure your essay with one topic per paragraph, don't try and say too much or be too clever but also don't be afraid to express your own opinions on a topic

Do you have tips for students who are nervous about supervisions?

- Treat them as a discussion and a space to learn; some of the most insightful and interesting things I've learned from my course have come from the discussions in Supervisions. Mention any extra reading you've found interesting to steer the conversation in your favour. Getting things wrong and admitting you don't know things in Supervisions is fine- the Supervisor won't care and should be more than willing to help you out.
- I think that writing the essay and going to lectures is all the preparation you need for History of Art supervisions in first year. I thought they would involve workshopping your writing or defending your argument, but mine were mostly just overviews of the week's material. Often you get some (very) brief verbal feedback at the beginning of the supervision and you might be asked to briefly explain your argument or what examples you used to your supervision partner. Then we would spend the rest of the supervision doing casual verbal analysis of images. Supervisors often make powerpoints with image comparisons. It feels very weird at first but basically take turns with your supervision partner making observations or asking questions about the images. It's not a competition with your partner and it's not an assessment by your supervisor.
- Supervisors are (generally) really lovely. I'd say to go in and not worry about impressing them, just be your honest self.

Any other tips?

- Your feelings and opinions are valid, your taste in art is valid, and your voice (academic and otherwise) is valid.

"With Land Economy, many people struggle to explain what it is. That's because it can be anything you want it to be (I know, I know....). It combines interesting yet practical disciplines such as Law, Economics, Urban/City planning, Finance and the environment. There is no degree that offers such breath, and that is what I love about it. Due to the breath of the subject, supervisions vary given the paper you take. The law supervisions in first-year are quite intense and you are expected to know the cases quite well, while with economics papers it is a mix of essays and maths problem sheets."

–Jed, Fitzwilliam

TIPS FROM CURRENT STUDENTS

Did you initially struggle with anything? If so, how did you overcome it?

- How to get through a large amount of reading whilst keeping to strict deadlines. For this I learnt how to skim read and look for important points in the research papers. It was helpful to read the introduction (take notes) and conclusion (take notes) and then skim through the middle and add anything important I may have missed. I was also able to split reading with a friend when the reading was too much!

What are your tips for making the most out of teaching?

- Annotations and notes around the lecture slides and then writing them up after the lecture - it makes sure that you're going over the content again and helps you gain more of an understanding. Also, don't write down things you know that you already know, it wastes time especially when the lecturer may be speaking really fast!

What are some of your essay writing tips?

- Look at the essay question, jot down a simple structure of how you may structure your answer based on lecture notes. Then go and do your reading, making notes all the way through. Then combine your lecture notes and reading into the structure you prebuilt. Then go straight in and start writing up your essay! Don't feel like you have to do this all in one sitting, the essays can be long and it's good to take a break if you've been going at it for a while. To plan, research and write up an essay will usually take me 2-3 days (sometimes shorter, sometimes longer) so don't put too much pressure on yourselves to do it all at once!

Do you have tips for students who are nervous about supervision?

- Remind yourself that your supervisor knows that you don't know everything, and doesn't expect you to - you're here to learn. You have the opportunity to speak to experts in your field, take advantage of it, ask questions and make the most of these opportunities! It's okay to be nervous, I was in my first few! In terms of prepping, make sure you've done the required work for the supervision and use the supervision as a way to further develop your understanding on the topic.

LAW

"My favourite part of my course are the lecturers and the supervisors. The lecturers and supervisors are some of the best in their fields (and, sometimes, are the ones who have written the texts on the reading list) so being able to discuss legal principles and cases with them has been amazing. While this might sound intimidating, supervisions are a great way to learn and understand in more depth and having friends on my course in my supervisions have made them really fun."

–Tolu, Fitzwilliam

TIPS FROM CURRENT STUDENTS

Did you initially struggle with anything? If so, how did you overcome it?

- Yes - Specifically Roman Law, the lectures are not the greatest, the textbook had me crying in the first week because they throw in Latin terms which I obviously had no knowledge about, and my supervisor wasn't the greatest. HOWEVER, once you start getting a grip on the Latin terms and spend a little extra time grappling with it, you WILL understand it and get a grip of it. I would recommend doing some reading during the Summer if you want a little head start (An Introduction to Roman Law by Barry Nicholas - I didn't personally read it but friends who had didn't struggle as much as I did so I wish that I did) on some of the terminology and also don't be intimidated by the subject! If you need help, ASK, I guarantee you are not alone if you struggle with it.
- The sheer amount of reading that is required for each of the papers - it's daunting! But you learn how to read judgements, pick out the important parts and pick and choose what to actually read and what isn't that important. Cntrl + F is your new best friend when it comes to judgements so that you can pick out the key paragraphs based on specific phrases. First term is just a lot of adjusting and keeping your head above water, but with time, you'll get it.

What are your tips for making the most out of teaching?

- Lectures; USE THE HANDOUT! Sometimes the handouts are not that great, but some of them are also amazing. Either way, use it when making your notes in lectures, some people write/type straight on the handout, I prefer having it open during the lecture, writing in a new document and referring to it and then going back and consolidating afterwards. Basically, the handout will at the very least give you key questions/points that you need to know, use it when revising to make sure that nothing extremely important has been missed out and use it to understand how to navigate your supervision readings and narrow exactly what you need to know. Also, CONSOLIDATE AFTER EACH LECTURE.
- Actually go to lectures - make notes and type them don't hand write them - it's a lot easier to keep up in the lectures (they all word-vomit info) and keep them all organised + you say you will go over handwritten notes but you really won't! Also going to lectures means you get to know which cases are important/why they are and can skip a lot of textbook reading which is v useful when you're short on time

What are some of your essay writing tips?

- PLAN PLAN PLAN, know what you're going to write before you write it
- Take a stance. Before now, most of your essays have probably been a lot of "well this side says this but this side says that but then this sides says...". It's a bit jarring to suddenly be told to take an actual stance but that's what you need to start doing, and it may not happen from the get go but basically, before starting your essay, think about what your opinion is. Do you agree/disagree? Do you think that it needs to change or is fine the way it is? Give the essay a direction, and then you use opposing views to further your view as in, "whilst some academics may argue...this is incorrect because...".
- Your introduction and conclusion should essentially say the same thing - from beginning to end your entire essay should point in a certain direction whilst showing why your stance is correct and the flaws in opposing arguments.
- For Problem questions, figure out what the claim (for tort) or crime could be, then go through the requirements of it to figure out if the claimant could succeed/if an offence has been committed. It won't be clear cut, often there is no right answer but it's about showing that you understand the relevant law and can apply it. Don't overthink it, pick out the relevant facts and use case law to help you on a particularly tricky point. If the law is unclear, say so, and then say which way you think it should go.
- Don't overthink it - actually write short-essays if you want to/don't have that much to say. don't worry too much about sticking to the word count (applies to going under and over) most of them who say they're strict about it actually aren't and will be fine with a couple hundred words either way. for some reasons law people love headings so use them!

Do you have tips for students who are nervous about supervision?

- Don't worry about trying to get everything right- supervisors like you more and you have a better time/get more out of it if you just say what you think. doesn't matter if you're wrong (i'll be honest i was wrong a lot) it really is better to have a go. if there's something you know from supo prep that you don't understand ask about it at the beginning. supervisors will say you have to read lots of cases in full but you honestly don't. where possible read as many summaries instead of reading whole cases unless it's a really major case.
- It's okay to be nervous! You'll find that you're more comfortable with some supervisors compared to others and that's completely normal. In all honesty, you might find that throughout the entire year, you dread going to a specific supervisor, and that's normal. But remember that supervisions are primarily *for YOU*. This is your time to ask for clarity if you're confused about something and really start to understand the topic, use your supervisor as a fount of knowledge rather than as someone you have to impress. They will know more than you, and it's your time to learn from them.

- They will provide a list of reading to do for each supervision, usually with “required” reading and “further” reading - generally just stick to the required, unless you’re particularly interested in a certain topic, otherwise leave the further reading for the holidays and also BE REALISTIC. You’re not going to have time to do ALL of the further reading, nor will you be able to remember it all for your exams, pick and choose what you read depending on what you particularly find interesting and what you feel you’d most likely answer in the exam.
- For tort especially there will be a LOT of cases, DON’T try to read them all, for most, all you need to know are the facts, the judgement and the reasoning, you DO NOT need it

Are there any books or resources that you recommend for students new to the course?

- Is Eating People Wrong
- What About Law?
- Letters to a Law Student
- The Secret Barrister
- An Introduction to Roman Law and An Introduction to Tort Law
- (<https://publiclawforeveryone.com/>) Public Law for Everyone: A great source of information about contemporary legal issues relating directly to current affairs, including a blog post containing advice for aspiring law students written by a former Cambridge law student!
- (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006tgy1/episodes/downloads>) BBC Radio 4 ‘Law in Action’ podcasts: These podcasts are an accessible way to hear about some interesting legal scenarios and issues.

Any other tips?

- Don't be intimidated by overconfident people that seem like they're working all the time. In first year I got really stressed out and spent way too much time in the library and yeah I did well and got a high 2.1 but also still got a high 2.1 in second year doing a lot less work and enjoying myself more. don't take yourself too seriously! uni is also meant to be fun, not just hard academic work.

LINGUISTICS

"I have really enjoyed studying linguistics. Each of the papers have something for everyone and so even if you come across a speedbump in the content that you aren't too comfortable with, there will always be someone on the course happy to help. Something else that I particularly enjoyed, specific to linguistics, was the amount of contact hours in Part 1A. With 4 hours of supervisions per week and 4 hours of lectures a week, there is plenty of time for independent study, but also, enough contact hours to bring everyone together so you can study with friends after classes. (I also enjoyed not particularly having many 9ams!)"
 –Katy, Fitzwilliam

TIPS FROM CURRENT STUDENTS

Did you initially struggle with anything? If so, how did you overcome it?

- I struggled a bit with essays (I had written none before university), and had to adjust quickly to them. It wasn't a big issue luckily, and it was mainly trial-and-error to see what supervisors liked.
- I think what I initially struggled most with was learning how to plan my time outside of the classroom. With linguistics part 1A, just 8hrs of contact hours a week leaves you with a lot of spare time and it can be quite difficult to work out when you should be relaxing, when you should be working, and what exactly the time you have set aside for "work" should consist of. I overcame this by first, making sure that my "work" time had a realistic pre-determined goal (e.g. Read Chapter x which is achievable for me in 1hr). And secondly, coming to terms with the fact that you really don't have to feel productive 24/7. If you are sat in the cafe enjoying a toastie and everybody else around you are sweating over their degree, that's okay. You don't have to be working at that very moment and that's okay. Enjoy your breaks and don't feel peer pressured to study all the time.

What are your tips for making the most out of teaching?

- Take notes on what sounds interesting/important, but make sure you actually listen and enjoy the lecture itself! Sometimes taking too many notes can leave you exhausted and not willing to pay too much attention. I prefer to take short but useful notes next to the handouts or slides, and enjoy the topic that's being covered.
- Go to them and talk about the content with your fellow linguists afterwards over a hot chocolate!

What are some of your essay writing tweets?

- Make sure you answer what the question is actually asking (not what you want it to ask!). Be coherent and clear and link your arguments back to the statement so that your argument makes sense throughout. Always have in mind what you're trying to argue for/against, and remember to write your essay with this in mind. Also, acknowledging other sides of the story or other opinions on the topic is important (you can refute them or disagree of course, but it shows critical awareness!)

LINGUISTICS

- Know ahead of time how much time you'll have. Spend enough time of pre-reading and planning because that makes the actual writing very seamless. Print out the essay when you're done to catch typos.

Do you have tips for students who are nervous about supervision?

- Supervisions are a lot of fun even if they look daunting! I usually prepare by going over the essay or question I've answered and make sure the topic is fresh in my head. Writing down questions to ask during the supervision is a good way to make sure you understand everything and make the most out of them. I remember my DoS said something like "Before going into a supo, you want to think: after this supervision, I want to have learned, this, this and this". It is a great chance to expand your knowledge and a lot of fun!
- Remember that your supervisors are just people and think about what you would want from your supervisees if you were in their shoes. Try your best to prepare the work that they have asked you to by the deadline and if you can't reach a deadline (*which is very normal and understandable*) make sure you let them know in advance with an explanation. If I were a supervisor, I would not want any of my students pulling an all-nighter just so that they can submit a less than adequate piece of work so they can say they did it- that makes a very tired student and a waste of time marking an essay that will not help the student improve or learn. Look at the assignments as soon as you can and email for help if you need it with time to spare.

Are there any books or resources that you recommend for students new to the course?

- Linguistics: An Introduction by Radford et al., general pop science books (eg Language Unlimited, The Language Instinct, The Infinite Gift, How Language Works...). Podcasts (Lingthusiasm) and Youtube Channels (eg Tom Scott, The Ling Space, TheTrevTutor, Fingtam Languages).
- How Language Works- David Crystal is a really good introduction to the field. You will be directed to other readings throughout the course so don't worry about that too far in advance.

Any other tips?

- Linguistics is fascinating! But don't be put off if you don't like absolutely every topic in first year. First year is more of a chance for you to see which areas suit you more and want to take in 2nd and 3rd year, so don't feel stressed if you think "oh, I don't like this topic", it's actually a fairly common feeling; and, of course, you'll find topics that you'll think "I love this!". And, also, don't worry about not knowing anything before starting the course: it's taught from scratch so no knowledge is expected of you (you'll be fine)!
- A five hour essay session from 4am until the 9am deadline is not a good time. And if you do reach that point, know that at least your next essay will be an improvement!

MATHEMATICS

"One of the things that bothered me when learning maths and science in secondary school and sixth form was that there were some topics that I found interesting but I knew I lacked a deep understanding of. For example I never really understood why calculus worked (more precisely why it was ok to basically divide by 0) or why special relativity had very bizarre and interesting predictions. It was in the 'Analysis' course in first year that I finally learnt about limits and convergence and in the 'Dynamics and relativity' course we were given a proper mathematical treatment of special relativity and much of classical dynamics. I've also enjoyed learning new and interesting maths such as group theory (a powerful area of pure maths which is essentially a theory of symmetry) and fluid dynamics."

–Israel, Fitzwilliam

TIPS FROM CURRENT STUDENTS

Did you initially struggle with anything? If so, how did you overcome it?

- The overwhelming rigour in maths tripos was a big challenge for anyone who has not encountered them before. It takes a lot of practise and discussion with fellow mathmos and people in the above year to be acquainted with new concepts - so talk to people, and they usually surprise you with inspiration.
- I'd often struggle with keeping up with work. I probably should have spoken to my Director of Studies and asked for more help.

What are your tips for making the most out of teaching?

- make really good notes in lecture will not only make you understand better but also save you lots of time in revision.
- Make sure to go to as many lectures as possible and to keep reviewing the work/catch up if you miss anything. The courses move quickly so its really easy to get left behind and then really hard to catch up again.

Do you have tips for students who are nervous about supervisions?

- It might be daunting and you might feel pressured to 'perform' well, but the tip is supervisions are perfect for making mistakes, and learning from them.
- They're usually not as bad as you think they'll be. Just do your best with the example sheets and make sure you know the stuff that's been covered in the last couple of lectures so you can answer if they ask you a question.

Any other tips?

- Don't leave your work till the last minute if at all possible. While it is possible to finish an example sheet in one night before its due I would not recommend it as sleep is pretty important too. Also don't be afraid to submit half finished questions or give up and move on, the supervisions are there for you to learn so supervisors will usually happily help you solve the ones you get stuck on as long as you attempt it.

MEDICINE

"I've really enjoyed my first year; obviously I was expecting a lot of work but was pleasantly surprised by how relaxed and understanding my supervisors seemed to be about the long process that settling in to uni sometimes is. Of course you can't get away with repeatedly not doing work but the odd essay extension and extra help with a particular topic is of course more than allowed! I've especially enjoyed the practicals - anatomy in the dissection room is a unique and incredibly humbling experience that I'll treasure. In terms of BME-specific issues, I'm super happy: my course and friendship group is so diverse and I've never been made to feel unwelcome or marginalised at all!"

–Rahul, Queens'

"The medicine course is very scientific in the first 2 years which is what drew me in. Having finished my first year I am amazed at how much my knowledge of the human body has grown. We've delved into the working of the body from a: molecular level, organ systems level and even a more wider socioeconomic lens. The weeks are packed full with lectures, dissections, practicals and experiments which keeps you on your toes. Supervisions are a great way to consolidate lecture and practical material. Essays are also surprisingly a good revision exercise to integrate all you've learnt so you're not just learning rote facts"

–Zute, Jesus

TIPS FROM CURRENT STUDENTS

Did you initially struggle with anything? If so, how did you overcome it?

- Imposter syndrome. Don't beat yourself up if you don't get everything straight away.

What are your tips for making the most out of teaching?

- Post-read things, take a little notebook in and write down things you want to ask your supervisors (so you don't forget). Support the others too!

Do you have tips for students who are nervous about supervision?

- Make sure you post-read the lecture (more important than pre-reading imo), understanding concepts is definitely more important than rote learning.

"In MML, you usually study around 4-6 texts and 1 film per language. I am currently studying French post A-Level and Spanish ab-initio. If you are learning a language from scratch, you often have more grammar work to do. I found this more enjoyable for Spanish and easier than advanced French grammar. Every 1-2 weeks you will write an essay (in English, around 1500 words) on each text. Most people read the books before coming to Cambridge, but I didn't and it was fine! You'll have a supervision to first discuss the essay, a few lectures then an opportunity to write the essay and get feedback. I managed to read some of the texts in English (some texts are very old) but it is better if you can read them in the target language. Supervisors do expect you to know some historical/contextual info on the texts you are studying. The library has so many resources so you'll always find the books you need and more. Supervisors are generally quite understanding if you require an essay extension or you are finding the content difficult."

–Karolina, St John's

TIPS FROM CURRENT STUDENTS

Did you initially struggle with anything? If so, how did you overcome it?

- I struggled with how to write/structure my essays, and how to prioritise secondary reading.
- Balancing primary reading with secondary reading in an essay. Finding your 'unique' voice/viewpoint.
- I initially found it difficult to understand cultural and historical references, as I wasn't exposed to a lot of 'assumed knowledge' that Cambridge might expect. I also found it difficult to write essays without knowing some theory and broader literary references. To overcome this, I would speak to my friends who studied English and History and just talk about what they're learning in their course and see if it can be applied to MML. I also realised that you don't need to know every single reference and theory; just look at the topics that interest you - be it on queer, feminist or postcolonial issues - and read more about that. Learning will be more enjoyable and it'll feel less like work.
- Knowing what work to prioritise and what not to do - speaking to second years really helped in College.
- Keeping up with the essay workload. It was important to figure out at the top of term when all my assignments for different modules were due to be able to anticipate heavier or lighter weeks. With essays, I had to give myself enough time in advance for research, note-taking, constructing an argument and writing.

What are your tips for making the most out of teaching?

- Know what the lecture is about before you go! For seminars, have a brainstorm yourself about the discussion points before you get there. Testing your ideas out in that type of forum can help judge whether you should explore ideas further in an essay.

- Don't focus on writing everything down or doing every activity if it's not going to be useful. Uni learning is self-guided, not like at school where you have to do every exercise set and nothing more - you need to actively think if the way you're using your time is making your life easier or not!
- Know what lecture you're in BEFORE you get there - what it's on and whether or not your time would be better spent elsewhere - so you can go straight into note-taking.
- Try to read the minimum of what's expected for lectures and seminars, even if it's just a summary of the text/topic on Wikipedia or sparknotes. You don't need to be an expert in the topic before you go, but it's very helpful to have a basic understanding of concepts so you don't get lost in what the lecturer/seminar leader is saying. This is especially important in introduction to linguistics lectures for Spanish and Portuguese, as the lecturer might introduce you to new grammatical terms. Having a basic understanding also makes the lecture/seminar more enjoyable and worthwhile.
- Also, this may be controversial, but don't feel guilty about not attending a lecture. Sometimes it is more worthwhile to focus your energy reading/preparing for a supervision than going to a lecture where the lecturer just reads notes from a screen. A lot of the lecture notes/slides will be added to Moodle so if you feel like you won't learn much from a lecture, feel free not to go.
- Type your lectures if possible! Ctrl+f function makes it super easy to find a specific topic/idea for essays and during ET. I like Microsoft one note because you can organise everything into notebooks, chapters and sections (for e.g. Spanish MT 19 > Emilio Pardo Bazan > Lecture 1, Lecture 2, Lecture 3, Lecture 4).
- Download CamScanner (free App) and make notes on your hand outs, take a picture of them with CamScanner and save them as PDFs onto your computer and insert them into your OneNote page with your lecture notes. (This saves time and is helpful for revision. Plus you don't have to worry about losing notes etc).
- Be as amicable with your supo partner(s) as possible. If you can choose them, CHOOSE them. I enjoyed my 2nd year supos much more because my supo partner and I were on the same page with what topics we wanted to study in detail and what we were good at etc. This isn't always possible but it definitely helps.
- Organise your entire Cambridge academic life in folders (e.g. Part 1A > MT 2019 > SPI > Week 1). Organising your work in folders by weeks makes everything so much easier and when it comes to revision you can find things quickly and move in between files easily.
- Email your supervisor if you don't understand something or if you need an extension. Extensions aren't a bad thing, just don't take them for granted.

What are some of your essay writing tips?

- Always write a plan first, however brief. Try and have one sentence, early in each paragraph, that signposts the main point you're trying to make.
- Try to use theory and historical context to structure your essay as it tends to elevate your writing. Some essay questions specifically reference some theories that you might not necessarily be aware of as a fresher, so look up any terms from the essay question that look new/peculiar. For example, one essay I wrote specifically called for a discussion on 'alienation', and I used Marx's theory of alienation to structure my essay where I introduced the concept in the introduction and then applied it to the literary text in the main body.
- Know ahead of time how much time you'll have. Spend enough time of pre-reading and planning because that makes the actual writing very seamless. Print out the essay when you're done to catch typos.
- Style can unfortunately vary between supervisors, so make sure you know what type of writing you need to be producing.
- Also try to read around the reading list to suit your own interests: you can just about interpret texts however way you want so you have a lot of freedom on what you write about!
- In your plan, provide a word count for each paragraph. It helps you keep track of your work.
- Copy the essay title into the header/footer of your doc so that you are constantly referring to the key words of the essay prompt.
- Highlight the key words of the essay prompt and run with that. If there is a specific word you don't know the meaning of, find the definition using a reputable dictionary (Oxf/Camb/Merriam Webster work, or the definition provided by an academic/thinker you've come across) and use that in your intro.
- Give yourself one night between completing the essay and sending it in (if possible). This is a personal preference, but after spending several hours reading and writing, I find that I need a night's sleep or at least a nap to clear my head and then make any final edits with a 'fresh set' of eyes.

Do you have tips for students who are nervous about supervision?

- For supervisions, have a few ideas/questions beforehand you would like to explore with the supervisor. Often, your supo partners will also have something to contribute so the pressure is rarely just on one person!
- Nerves are **NORMAL**. Remember that your supervisions count for **NOTHING**. Literally nothing. Of course, put in the work, but if you have a particularly condescending supervisor or supo partners that act like they know everything, take a breather and remember this isn't the final exam. You'll be fine.
- In terms of prep, I recommend reading over your essay before the supervisor just so that you remember what you said. Even if you think it's bad, your critical mind will prepare you for what your supervisor **COULD** say, and more often than not they'll have something positive to say opposed to something completely negative.

MML

- Try to read the text beforehand for literature supervisions, or at least summaries of the text. Depending on your supervisors, you might have one supo before writing the essay where you discuss the text generally and then a second supo focusing on the essay. Maybe exchange notes/essays with your supo partners throughout the year so you can feed off each other's ideas.
- Make sure you've done your reading. Trust that you're meant to be there and try not to feel inadequate even in the face of smug supervision partners or supervisors.
- Make sure you do as much of the prep work as possible in your time. Don't get intimidated by other students seeming to know it all. At the end of the day you're there to learn, so who cares how much or little everyone else speaks - do what helps you to learn.

Any other tips?

- You do not need to read every book in the original language. Even though you are encouraged to do so, you can definitely excel in MML by just reading translations (and even summaries!) of the original text.
- Don't worry about not doing very well in your first translations, especially if English is not your first language and you find it hard to translate tone/register. English is not my first language and I did not read a lot of English literature before university so I found translation very difficult, even if I understood the text quite well in the original language. You will develop translation skills along the way just by reading more. I brought my translation grade up from a 2.2 in first year to a first in final year, so it might take some time!
- Try not to buy books, in 99% of cases you can access them from the Cambridge libraries.
- Making friends helps you through all of this so prioritise that at the start.

MUSIC

"There are six modules in each year and you get an increasing amount of flexibility in choosing the ones you want to do as you progress - so by third year, you get to choose all six of your modules and really go in depth about aspects of Music that you're interested in. Outside of the degree, there are also many ways to get involved in music and as a city, Cambridge has a wealth of opportunities, whether it's performing, composing, conducting, or even directing and producing. It might be hard to keep track of everything that's going on, but I personally found that a lot of my learning happened outside of the lecture theatre (or the library). In the end, I could always find a way to re-apply what I learnt into my degree work - so it's really a win-win situation all around!"

-Cheryl, Robinson

TIPS FROM CURRENT STUDENTS

Did you initially struggle with anything? If so, how did you overcome it?

- Lots of academic reading - trial and error to work out the best way to skim and take notes. Analysis - my analysis improved most as my understanding of tonal skills improved - I have found Piston's book on Harmony really helpful for understanding specific devices.

What are your tips for making the most out of teaching?

- For a lot of lectures I found the lecture reading (which I didn't really look at until exams) more useful than the actual lectures. I'd say lecture reading is most useful for MMT. Generally, the papers 2 and 3 lectures are best for understanding specific examples rather than overall history. I found the analysis group sessions quite intimidating but often they just wanted quite simple answers to their questions (there were people in the room who dominated with over complicated explanations but I found simple and sometimes obvious answers to be the most effective).

What are some of your essay writing tips?

- For papers 1, 2 and 3 you can be really free with the reading you do (after the essential reading) and explore stuff you're interested in. I found it really fun to find something quite unusual within the period or theme that was in the question and explore that rather than going for simple answers to what I found to be not very exciting questions. For history, examples are really important for backing up your points. Or you can have a couple of examples that run through and use them to demonstrate historical/musicological themes. I struggled with analysis but found that my best essays were when I used quite fun metaphors for the pieces and played around with language, despite still using quite simple analysis.

MUSIC

Do you have tips for students who are nervous about supervisions?

- It's good to have key dates or a timeline of composers and pieces and historical events in your head - I often found myself confused by the chronology of things. I struggled with self confidence because lots of other people in my supervisions would always give long complicated answers but I started to gain confidence by realising that I could answer without lots of over specified language so trust yourself and what you think the answer might be and don't feel intimidated if other people seem confident and more knowledgeable than you because I think often they just use long words.

Are there any books or resources that you recommend for students new to the course?

- Grove online is really useful for generally quite short explanations of historical periods, themes, people and pieces. I found it useful to have a physical copy of Taruskin handy as well rather than using the website which I find hard to read. Heller is really useful for History 1.

Any other tips?

- There's lots of really fun, interesting and quite experimental writing and ideas to be explored throughout the course. I enjoyed seeking out musicologists I learnt about through MMT to apply to other courses which I otherwise found a bit boring sometimes.

NATURAL SCIENCES

"In first year I took Biology of Cells, Evolution & Behaviour, Physiology of Organisms & Mathematical Biology (all available biology options in part IA natural sciences). For each module, you will get a problem sheet/essay to complete for the next supervision and this accounts for a few hours of work (for each module) per week. Generally, I found the course materials interesting but sometimes difficult to engage with given the pace of lectures (& practicals) and the quantity of material you learn so if you choose this course make sure you're ready to be consistently on top of your work! Options for second and third year are much more wide-ranging which I am very much looking forward to. This course is for you if you want diverse course options and to get your money's worth of contact hours!"

–Teofisto, Homerton

"Natural Sciences is a great subject and, for me, one of the reasons why is the breadth of what we get to learn. Even though you might end up specialising in a specific subject, it's really great to be able to explore other topics that you enjoy, especially if you're as indecisive as me. In fact you can even try out new things for example I, a very physical science based NatSci, am going to do a biological subject next year and that's something you don't really get anywhere else."

–Elia, Clare

TIPS FROM CURRENT STUDENTS

Did you initially struggle with anything? If so, how did you overcome it?

- YES it was a mess. I think the approach taught at A Level to solving problems is sometimes different to approaches used in uni. Some of the concepts are also quite hard to wrap one's head around. I think it depends on what kind of learner you are and what would work best for you. I learn through talking things through so finding friends to explain things to me and who I could ask questions about it. I also recommend asking for additional supervision.
- I would also say not to beat yourself up too much about not understanding all of the content immediately. Some of the stuff only clicked much later after doing Tripos questions. For me doing questions also helps a lot so doing as many of the past Tripos questions may also help you understand what you learnt in lectures in the context of exams.
- Didn't even try to keep up with anyone else, just worked through the problems at my own pace and picked it up slowly and surely with a fair amount of hard work. Ended up doing alright. Turns out people always seem like they know so much more than you but 90% of the time that's just not true.
- I found the workload quite overwhelming- this eased off over the years but i'd say for 1st year take every task one by one and don't panic! I also found myself discussing supervision work with my coursemates helpful because it saves you from being stuck for hours.

NATURAL SCIENCES

- Paying attention in lectures, completing supo work on time, understanding, feeling incapable alongside the rest of the cohort. Haven't quite overcome it yet, but more and more focusing on learning for myself and accepting that maybe I'm not as quick as other people or as completely invested/involved in my subject as other people but that's okay.
- Coming from an underperforming state school, I felt like I was already behind before the term had even started. This was sort of true as I wasn't confident with some of the content, especially for maths, that others were very comfortable with. However, it is definitely possible to catch up in terms of the content, but more importantly in terms of the confidence. I spoke with my director of studies and some of my supervisors who then provided additional support. The confidence in my ability to do the work is also something that just came over time.

What are your tips for making the most out of teaching?

- It's good to read through your notes and annotate them between lectures. In IA NatSci you cover a lot of content, so would recommend looking at only the key points in detail.
- Find a way of note-taking that works for you! I struggled to concentrate in 1st/2nd year because I'd spend effort trying to find the right part on the handout, but in 3rd year we were only offered slides. I actually found that annotating slides was more helpful so if you're struggling, try different methods!
- Stay awake. Sleep has never meant more to me. Going out is all well and good but focus on going to all lectures (unless ill or something) and staying awake. Once I let myself sleep through one/miss one, I started a pattern of missing lectures and sleeping through many of the ones I did attend.
- Make use of the lecture recordings if you have them. In terms of the practicals, make use of the practical demonstrators - they are generally very friendly and are there to help you!

What are some of your essay writing tips?

- There's no single "right" way of writing an essay. all of your supervisors will say different (sometimes contradicting) things. it is annoying. but try to refer to mark schemes on the course website, or ask your supervisor for one.
- Science essays are supposed to be short. They're not the same as a humanities essay. I've found that 1-2 sides typed is enough. More of the focus is on content and clearly worded explanations/arguments.

NATURAL SCIENCES

Do you have tips for students who are nervous about supervisions?

- Supervisions have turned out to be much less intense than I expected. In NatSci, you do about 6 questions beforehand and the supervision just involves discussing your answers and perfecting them. It rarely feels like you're being put on the spot because you're talking about questions that you've already done. For me it feels like the supervisor does most of the hard work. In preparation, I would recommend doing the best job you can of the questions before the deadline. I occasionally do questions without my notes if I'm sure I can do it well, but if not, I usually solve the problems open book.
- I've also found coming to supervisions with questions about the lecture notes can be helpful. Supervisors are happy to help on those after you've been through the 6 problem questions.
- make sure you have a look at the lecture material before going in- you forget a surprising amount over a week!
- See them as a tool for you rather than a lesson. Bring queries from the work you just did or from lecture material you didn't understand. Effort in questions and trying to understand is appreciated more than completing every question perfectly.
- Have a list of questions about things you don't understand ready to ask the supervisors. Alternatively, you might be able to email your supervisors about any topics that you want to go over in the supervision.

Are there any books or resources that you recommend for students new to the course?

- Only in studying Maths have I used an extra textbook- lecture notes are usually all you need. I used "Mathematical Methods for Physicists and Engineers" by Riley Hobson and Bence for IA and IB Maths. Would recommend using only if you're doing Maths B in first year, otherwise you would be doing a lot of extra content in each chapter. I used the book to start on the course a bit early, but rarely used it once lectures had started.
- Do pre course questions. They don't really matter but I didn't do them properly and found that when lectures started I had forgotten a ridiculous amount from A- levels, and enjoying freshers week meant that I didn't have time to brush up once I got to Cambridge. Really wish I'd done it before.

Any other tips?

- Would strongly recommend taking all notes during lectures on your laptop. My setup was a Microsoft Surface with the Surface Pen. This meant I could download and save the lecture slide pdfs on OneNote and annotate them on the screen with the Pen. This meant I saved time packing for every lecture and never lost any notes. However, if this is not possible it's not a big issue- most students in my year took notes with pen and paper.

NATURAL SCIENCES

- Always use the best tools when writing reports. For example, set up automatic numbering of figures, tables, headings and subheadings on word (or equivalent).
- For me I think it's important to prioritize having fun, especially in first year. NatSci is a long course, and I've found it much easier to maintain enthusiasm by enjoying other aspects of Cambridge life like sports/meet ups with mates/college events etc.
- if you're stuck on a maths/chemistry problem, that's ok- just note it down on your work when submitting. Your time here is too precious to spend hours dwelling on a problem when your supervisor can show the solution in 5 minutes. get some sleep!
- not work related- as an introvert, I realised in 2nd year that friendships take some effort, especially at the start. Put yourself out there, proactively send messages to make plans, go to societies- eventually you'll find yourself gravitating towards the people you feel most comfortable with. and/or you'll find yourself becoming comfortable with new people. everything will be okay <3
- Get involved. Try something new. First year is a great time to mess up and learn how much you are happy doing (socially, hobby wise, society wise, work wise, self catering vs halls, and sleep wise). Future years count more towards the final (esp last year ofc), so it pays to know how much you can handle. Also explore other colleges (/make friends from other colleges). I wish I did a bit more of that, there are so many cool places to see and activities to do and people to meet.
- The learning curve for phys nat sci can be very steep. However, as long as you do all the work and ASK FOR HELP when you need it, you will be able to get through it.

PHILOSOPHY

"Philosophy for me has been a stimulating introduction to new concepts and there has never been a dull topic. Even with ideas I don't yet understand, I have developed this attitude where all I want to do is tackle them until I do. I like that with the small class sizes and one-on-one supervisions, I have developed a relationship with my supervisors and fellow students that is unlike the environment in other subjects. There are always philosophy-specific events that range in formality and medium. After one year, I already feel that I'm developing my own style of argument and even though I wouldn't have believed it before, I am becoming an actual philosopher. It becomes less daunting to call yourself that once you realise that all it involves is what you're constantly being taught to do: question and redefine. Three years isn't a lot of time but this subject quickly shapes the way you think and converse with other people. I like that I'm able to relate to other fields of study but that I'm also given the opportunity to narrow down my interests should I wish to specialise. Now, I'm feeling more confident in my ability to reason logically and express myself more clearly."

–Kenya

TIPS FROM CURRENT STUDENTS

Did you initially struggle with anything? If so, how did you overcome it?

- At first, I struggled with adjusting to the new content. I had never studied philosophy before and I was immediately confronted with a lot of interesting but detailed information. There were terms being used that were borrowed from other languages and it was clear that having prior knowledge of certain texts would be helpful.
- If I could change things, I would have held a routine of rereading and annotating my notes after the lectures, so that I'm not left having to remind myself of the last lecture's content right before today's lectures. There's no need to memorise everything at this point, but consolidating new knowledge is important for long-term retention.

What are your tips for making the most out of teaching?

- Active engagement with lectures is a must. I was told that it helps if you write your notes instead of typing them, but you should do whatever works for you. Most of the time you won't even have to make your own notes, so you don't have to haul your laptop with you to the lecture hall.
- You will get a lot of handouts and things can get messy very quickly, so I advise dating each lecture handout so you can eventually order all of them correctly.
- Lecturers are very helpful in Philosophy as most of them share their material either through handouts or on their website or Moodle, sometimes before the lecture. I suggest reading the material beforehand so that you can pay attention to the details that aren't included in their notes. You get the most from being present at the lecture, listening to the nuances in the lecturer's voice and paying attention to questions posed by other students at the end.

PHILOSOPHY

What are some of your essay writing tips?

- Reading. Your comprehension of the texts sets the foundation for your essay. Spend as much time as you need to read and reread until you can properly understand the arguments given. This makes it easier to generate a convincing argument of your own.
- The structure of the essay itself isn't as important as the content and you will learn to improve your writing over the year.

Do you have tips for students who are nervous about supervisions?

- They will almost always be one-on-one which is not common for other subjects. It is more exciting than it is nerve-wracking because once you leave the supervision you come out with a much greater understanding of the concepts.
- Supervisors just want to understand your thought process. They want you to clarify points made in your essay and it's an opportunity to have an in-depth discussion about the question that you wouldn't get from a lecture. There are no stupid questions and thinking out loud is encouraged.
- To prepare, reread your essay to remind yourself of the argument that you presented. If you have changed your mind about your view, take note of it too so you can reach a satisfying conclusion in your discussion with your supervisor. Have one or two questions ready if there was anything you didn't understand from the reading.
- Afterwards, it would be useful to rewrite the notes that you have jotted down in the supervision in a more coherent format. They usually contain ways on how you can express your point clearer and significant terminology that will be useful in exams.

Any other tips?

- Often it can seem like other students have a greater understanding of the subject by virtue of the terminology they use and the number of times they contribute in lectures. This is common in a subject like philosophy where offering different opinions serves as one of its core functions.
- These things aren't an indication of how good you are at philosophy, so don't feel intimidated by them when they happen. It is a new environment for many people and a lot of them are in the same position and haven't studied philosophy before. We all want to prove ourselves and resist those feelings of imposter syndrome when they appear.
- If you go at your own pace, stick to your personal academic goals and choose not to feel pressured by outward demonstrations of mastery you'll be okay.

"I like how this course lets students explore other interests through additional papers from other departments. This allows you to see the application of psychology to various other subjects."

–Ayan, Fitzwilliam

TIPS FROM CURRENT STUDENTS

Did you initially struggle with anything? If so, how did you overcome it?

- Probably managing and dealing with time constraints and not being overwhelmed by deadlines as well as ensuring to establish a routine. It's incredibly easy (and very normal!) to feel disorganised at the start. I overcame this by keeping a planner in which I wrote down all the deadlines I was assigned, and gave myself personal deadlines for when I wanted them done (usually slightly earlier) and by doing this I ensured I didn't clash with other due dates meaning I wouldn't stress over more than one piece of work at a time and give on rushed / low quality work. Sticky notes as well!!! Whether they're in your room, laptop, the door, having reminders with due dates on them helps to ensure you don't forget something is due and when.
- I initially struggled with the amount of biology and chemistry I learnt within Michaelmas term. I learnt to overcome this difficulty by revising the lectures and seeking additional support through friends or YouTube videos for the content I particularly found difficult.

What are your tips for making the most out of teaching?

- My tip is to revise your lectures after attending them. For example, after a lecture you immediately aim to finish all of your notes while the lecture is still fresh in your mind. I believe by doing so it helps you understand the content so much better.
- Just make sure you go, and take notes of as much as you can, as well as questions you have. You'll tend to forget any questions you had during the lecture once you get to your supervision, so by ensuring you have a note of what you were uncertain of beforehand, you are likely to clear up any misunderstandings very rapidly as well as expand on that.

What are some of your essay writing tips?

- My essay writing tips are to really explain your point. If you have a particular view then express it without any words like 'perhaps' or 'maybe'. Be confident in your arguments!
- Make sure you plan and try to do it on a separate day when you begin the actual typing of your essay to alter your perspective and view things afresh. Actually use the reading list for your subject, and learn to take away things from your sources in a productive manner, whether it's verifying if there are set pages or scanning the chapters for what may seem relevant.

Do you have tips for students who are nervous about supervisions?

- There's really no need to be nervous. It's literally an informal academic discourse with people who are passionate about the topic and are here to help you- there is a reason you are studying your subject and you aren't expected to know anything. Reading over your lecture notes beforehand, perhaps doing a mind map of Main topics explored during the week as well as further reading you may have done. Always ensure you have all your equipment with you (whether that is calculator, laptop, pen, pencil etc).

Any other tips?

- Enjoy your First Year and don't feel anxious if you perhaps aren't understanding the content straight away or are finding it extremely difficult. Everyone feels that way but perseverance is key!

THEOLOGY

"Theology is an incredibly diverse subject which I have really enjoyed studying. From history, to literature, language, philosophy and anthropology- there is so much to engage with. I hope you enjoy it as much as I did and please do get in touch if you need any help or advice."

–Talia, Newnham

TIPS FROM CURRENT STUDENTS

Did you initially struggle with anything? If so, how did you overcome it?

- Learning how to read books well, because it's virtually impossible to read all the books they tell you to read. I was really up front with my DoS about needing advice; he said that you should try and read the introduction, conclusion and relevant chapters of a book. I also really really recommend 'how to get a first' by Thomas Dixon.
- I initially struggled to understand with how my supervisors wanted me to write my essays e.g. referencing, line of argument. However, I realised that I needed to write in a way I was confident and that the worse thing that can happen is they don't like the essay. Also, I studied Arabic in first year as one of my papers and really struggled with how to adapt my learning style to languages. The answer is quizlet and grammar practice.
- Writing supervision essays involves a large amount of reading, and I struggled with reading, making notes, and writing an essay in limited time. I learned that having a clear idea of what I wanted out of a text before reading it stopped me from writing pages of notes, speeding up both my reading and essay writing time.
- I also found myself constantly editing earlier paragraphs of my essay as I wrote and even changing my mind on the central arguments of my essay. I overcame this over time by planning my essay in far greater detail, to the point of having the content of almost every sentence planned out before writing.

What are your tips for making the most out of teaching?

- Commit yourself to asking a question at the end of the lecture. It will make you pay attention and is a great way to find out more!
- To actually attend, make good notes, and to not stress if you don't understand the content.
- If the lecture is on a set text, read it beforehand if possible and note down areas that you find less clear or need clarifying. It's a lot easier to make notes in a lecture once you know what parts you need to pay most attention to.

What are some of your essay writing tips?

- TAKE BREAKS!!! Go outside for a walk and think about your argument. Your argument is way more important than reading loads
- Read the understand the content, not just for your essay question. Don't describe, create a line of argument.

THEOLOGY

- The first supervision essays will likely be on topics not yet covered in lectures, so make sure to read a summary of the topic before reading larger and more dense extracts. A less detailed overview will help you to understand the major arguments and positions so you know what to look for when you begin detailed reading.

Do you have tips for students who are nervous about supervisions?

- Re-read your essay shortly before going into the supervision. Try and sum your argument up in a single sentence; this will really encourage you to be concise and be a good springboard for discussion. If you got in you probably did an interview and these are like interviews but way less serious. I guess the best advice is to just try and enjoy the fact you're talking to a world-leading thinker about a genuinely fascinating topic.
- Just make sure you go over your notes beforehand and if there's anything you're struggling with, email your supervisors before the supo (this includes if you need an extension).
- Read through your essay and identify your key arguments, as well as any comments that you may have focused on less than others. Be prepared to expand on or justify them in the supervision.
- If there was something that you didn't understand during your reading, ask your supervisor to clarify it - they're there to help you learn.

Are there any books or resources that you recommend for students new to the course?

- Definitely get ahead on the language learning. Buying the book before you start and working through the first two chapters is a really good idea. Making sure you're always a step ahead will prevent you falling behind.
- For biblical papers, Zondervan Illustrated Bible Commentaries are accessible and give snippets of historical and literary context for biblical passages. They're available at the Divinity Library as well as some college libraries.

VETERINARY MEDICINE

"The veterinary medicine course is both equally challenging and rewarding. Having dissections every week not only introduces us to anatomy in an engaging and interesting way, it is often where you meet some of your closest friends on the course. The "we're in it together" spirit of the cohort makes any challenging lecture or practical fun and worth every minute. Supervisions are a great place to reinforce lecture content or to clarify any confusion in the lecture notes. Some supervisors who actually are vets themselves often add a new element of interest to supervisions as they recount any weird or interesting cases from their day at work. Students are always engaged in animal handling in every week of Michaelmas and there are always practical clinical skill classes held for preclinical students every week at the vet school where you learn important skills for clinical years. As a fresher, it is also so important that you take time for yourself and maintain a healthy work/play balance during the course. Engaging in societies, sports, student nights out or even having nights in with friends at the college bar are all amazing ways to unwind at the end of a hectic week and allow yourself to be refreshed and primed for the week ahead - looking after yourself should be the most important thing, and generally the students who take time for themselves are the happiest and have the best experiences on the course! Overall, whilst there is a heavy workload which can be difficult at the best of times, the people you meet on the course and in college make it worthwhile and, as is often the case in academics, the most challenging courses are often the most rewarding as you progress further into your degree. My #1 advice for freshers coming into a lockdown term especially, is don't chain yourself to your desk and don't stay in your room too much! Spend time with your friends as best as you can, make a habit of engaging in any college events which take your fancy and overall have fun on the course."

–Nicole, Girton

TIPS FROM CURRENT STUDENTS

Did you initially struggle with anything? If so, how did you overcome it?

- Balancing how much work was needed and not over-working. I think trying out what works best for you and at the end of day, your well-being should be prioritised over everything else no matter how stressful it is.
- I struggled a lot with anatomy throughout preclin, it's usually one of those subjects that clicks or doesn't with people. Supervisions helped with it but my main advice is making sure you try and keep up with it, come prepared to dissections and don't stress too much. It clicked for me only a month or so before exams!

VETERINARY MEDICINE

What are your tips for making the most out of teaching?

- (Lectures) attending them is better than not attending (despite some being 9am) because there might be something from the lecture that goes in. Going through the lectures beforehand helps with the “shock” of learning new information and crucially if you have time, summarise your notes after lectures because it makes it easier for your revision. (Practicals) going over the handouts helps and saves time for you to just get on with the experiments.
- Definitely prereading and being prepared overall. If there's stuff you don't understand in the prereading, defo go to the lecture and if it doesn't get sorted out then follow up in supervisions. Some lecture series will be lectured by some not-so-great people, so my advice is go to the first or first two lecs of the series and decide if you like the lecturing style, the notes provided etc. Some people aren't built for lecture-based learning (and that's ok!) but hopefully this year things are all being recorded since they're moving online (if I recall correctly). Definitely go to all practicals even if they're boring since attendance is required and you get to see your mates too! Exams for practicals (that aren't anatomy) are usually based on material available on Moodle so don't worry too much if you zone out in Histology or BOD (it gets like that). Dissections are essential. Don't miss them unless you really need to.

What are some of your essay writing tips?

- Clear structure (e.g. use of subheadings).
- Structure is important. Nailing an introduction that's concise and explains what you're going to discuss is a good start. Keep your essays theoretical and do not add more words than you need to. Lecture notes will help a lot but don't get discouraged if it takes you a while to get used to essay writing. You'll spend a lot of time on them at the beginning but soon enough you'll get quicker at writing them. Adding clinical examples where appropriate is good as a bonus. Diagrams are needed wherever possible but definitely in anatomy essays!

Do you have tips for students who are nervous about supervisions?

- Don't worry about asking “silly” questions - pretty certain everyone is probably wanting to ask that question and don't be afraid to ask the supervisor to repeat what they said or clarify.

VETERINARY MEDICINE

- I am quite an anxious person so supos were quite hard for me in the beginning. My advice is to try and move past your nerves to maximise your output from each supo. Reading up on lecture or anatomy material before supos is definitely helpful and will help get you onto a supervisor's good side. Don't get too discouraged, it can be really hard being in supervisions with people who understand the topic while you don't but the whole point is to learn! And some of the supervisors are really nice! I've also noticed different supervisors prefer different writing styles for essays so that may be something to consider when it comes to supervision work.

Any other tips?

- It can be really hard settling in. I found first year extremely difficult and demotivating. And it can be especially hard in vet-med where you're surrounded by people who are super set on becoming a vet and have no sense of self-doubt. My advice is to trust the process and yourself, seek help when you need it, and always make time for rest (mental & physical)! I am also happy to be contacted if you ever need any help (since it is a generally white dominated course/career)!

CREDITS

This guide would not have been possible without the dozens of current students who volunteered to share tips and advice.

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