First let me say how pleased we are that Pembroke College has decided to offer you a place to read French from **October 2017**. This letter outlines the first, first-year, part of the Modern Languages course. In the academic year 2017-2018 Dr Farrant will be on leave. Dr Stephen Goddard will be in charge of French; after 1 October all correspondence should be with him ([stephen.goddard@stcatz.ox.ac.uk](mailto:stephen.goddard@stcatz.ox.ac.uk)); though Dr Farrant will be happy to answer any preliminary enquiries.

In your first three terms at Pembroke you will preparing for your **Preliminary Examinations** (‘Prelims’), taken in June of the first year. The **language syllabus** consists of grammar, translation into and out of French, summary, and an oral examination (**see Annexe A**). Your priority should be to ensure that you can use the most generally-encountered grammatical structures. The Oxford Course sets great store by accuracy: at the very least, you should have a firm command of the material covered in the grammar by Ferrar by the time you arrive. You should also read as widely as possible in order to acquire the range of vocabulary required by the Preliminary examination; the books by Duffy and Barron can help you do this. A Collection (College examination) may be set to test your knowledge at the beginning of the first term.

The **literature syllabus** is outlined in **Annexe B**, together with suggestions for beginning work on literature. You will be starting work on the short texts Paper, Paper III, in Michaelmas (Autumn) term. Paper III work continues until the middle of the Spring (Hilary) Term; from then until the middle of the Trinity (Summer) term you will study Paper IV. Oxford terms are brief but intensive: you should have read and become familiar with the whole syllabus in both languages at least once before you come up; if you do not, you will almost certainly find yourself falling rapidly behind.

A reading list for your other language or subject is also enclosed. If you are studying French Single Honours (French Sole), reading lists will be enclosed for those in French thought, Literary Theory and Cinema, or for Linguistics for those reading French and Linguistics. If you are doing EMEL, with French and a Middle Eastern Language, you do not have to do Paper III, although you are advised and encouraged to read the texts and attend the seminars and/or tutorials, as it is an important introduction to commentary on a range of canonical French texts.

Further information on all aspects of the course is available at the Faculty Website [http://www.mod-langs.ox.ac.uk/](http://www.mod-langs.ox.ac.uk/). The essential thing is that you should not lose contact with French language, literature or culture between now and your arrival. Try to read as widely as possible, whatever you are doing, and to experience things French as multifariously as you can. You will be ‘reading’ for a degree here, and that is precisely what you are expected to do. The Oxford course offers an unrivalled range of options in language, literature and linguistics: come ready to make the most of it once you arrive. But languages also form a wonderful portal for all sorts of other activities and experiences. Enjoy your preparation, and we look forward to welcoming you here in October.

Tim Farrant M.A. D. Phil.
Reader in Nineteenth-Century French Literature, Senior Modern Languages Tutor, Fellow and Tutor in French.

**Annexe A – French Preliminary Examination – Language**
1. Syllabus

**Language**

**Paper I (3hrs) Grammar, Translation into French and Summary**

1. **Grammar**

20 short sentences to translate into French, testing common, not exceptional points of French grammar such as those explained in R. Hawkins and R. Towell, *French Grammar and Usage*, 2nd edn, 2001, also downloadable online: https://archive.org/stream/147958173FrenchGrammarAndUsage/147958173-French-Grammar-and-Usage#page/n33/mode/2up

2. **Translation into French**

A passage of about 180 words from a post-1945 creative or discursive text testing accuracy in negotiating common grammatical and syntactic structures rather than abstruse vocabulary, but also requiring imagination and flexibility in dealing with some words and phrase.

3. **Summary**

A passage of 500-700 words of French from a work of reflective, analytical or critical writing, with the following rubric: Write a summary in French of the following passage using 180-200 words and bringing out clearly the writer’s argument. You must not simply reproduce the expression of the original passage.

**Papers II A and II B Unseen and Seen translation into English (1.5 hrs each, 3 hrs in toto)**

**Paper II A Unseen Translation into English (1.5 h)**

A passage of about 250 words of French from a post-1900 creative or discursive text testing accuracy in negotiating common grammatical and syntactic structures and some appropriately challenging vocabulary, but also requiring imagination and fluency in English expression.

**Paper IIIB Translation into English from Prescribed Texts (1.5hr)**

A passage of about 300 words from one of the three novels set for Paper IV but excluding *La Chastelaine de Vergy*.

**Oral**

Candidates must actively participate in at least eight French oral classes of at least one hour before fifth week of the Trinity Term of their first year, involving reading aloud in French with attention to proper pronunciation and intonation and discussion in French of passages on contemporary French culture. Candidates who fail to satisfy this requirement shall have their mark for each of the two written papers in French language reduced by one out of ten. Candidates for the September re-sit in French language who have not previously in that academic year satisfied the attendance requirement will be examined viva voce to demonstrate their competence in spoken French. Certification is required from College by noon on the Friday of 5th week of Trinity Term.

**Language Teaching**

Pembroke is lucky enough to have a native-speaker lector in French (Mlle Sarah Houillon). Language teaching is provided mostly by her and by the College tutors, but the University French language instructor (Dr. Michael Abecassis) also organises central University classes to supplement College tuition (as well as periodic lectures by major figures in contemporary French music, theatre and film). Classes in College will give practice on all aspects of the work on which
you will be examined in French language. Tutors will offer advice about the use of dictionaries and grammars. You should also make full use of the resources of the Maison Française d'Oxford (www.mfo.ac.uk), the French government research centre in Oxford which offers a full range of lectures, seminars, film screenings and debates, as well as an extensive interdisciplinary library of books and films and a Culturethèque.

2. Preparing to study French Language at Pembroke

Get a good bilingual dictionary, such as the Collins Robert, or the Oxford Hachette Dictionary of French, plus the Petit Robert 1, which will serve you throughout the course and beyond in working monolingually within French; www.lexilogos.com has indispensable monolingual (including historical) dictionaries in French. You will also need a good grammar. Compact, accessible grammars are H. Ferrar, A French Reference Grammar, and W. Rowlinson, French Grammar (both OUP). You should purchase R. Hawkins and R. Towell, French Grammar and Usage (Arnold) with the associated workbook Practising French Grammar – A Workbook and work through the exercises before arrival in Michaelmas Term. A vocabulary book can also be useful in providing a coordinated introduction to specific areas of usage, e.g. J.H. Duffy, Using French Vocabulary, (Cambridge) or Mastering French Vocabulary (Barron). You may be tested on grammar and translation on the Friday of week 0 (Freshers' Week) of Michaelmas Term.

Your aim should be to speak, write and think fluently and accurately in French. To that end, you should read as widely as possible, beginning with the major papers Le Figaro and Le Monde and the news magazines Le Point, L'Express and Le Nouvel Observateur, Le Canard enchainé is the rough equivalent of Private Eye. Listen to radio (more effective than TV, except perhaps the cultural channel Arte http://www.arte.tv/fr and TF1 http://lci.tf1.fr/): the Radio France website http://www.radiofrance.fr/ has links to France Inter, the flagship French station, and France Culture and France Musique; podcasts and apps at http://www.radiofrance.fr/services/rfmobiles/podcast/). Interact as much as possible with native speakers and spend time in France/ other Francophone countries. Write down unfamiliar vocabulary and expressions in a notebook together with their English translations, testing yourself a few days later to see whether you can render them back into French; if not, note the relevant expressions down again and repeat the exercise until you can. Remember that the acid test of a linguist is the ability to translate back into the foreign language; it is a good idea to attempt some proses (translations into French) as a means of working towards this end. But do not neglect reading in English, which will help you with the Unseen exercises, which form part of examinations here.

Annexe B - French Preliminary Examination – Literature

You will need to purchase the texts set for examination in Papers III and IV, if possible in the editions indicated. Second-hand copies are often available from Blackwells Booksellers, 48-51 Broad Street, Oxford (01865 792792, www. blackwell.co.uk), and the Oxfam Bookshops in Turl St and St Giles. Read the texts in the original; don’t be tempted to use translations, which may actively impede your progress; do remember that you will be required to translate parts of the Paper IV texts (apart from La Chastelaine de Vergy) in the Preliminary examination. You should initially read the texts as quickly and continuously as possible, noting and looking up only vocabulary and expressions which are an absolute obstacle to comprehension. Take notes only after a first reading, recording your first impressions and points that seem to you important (themes, structure, techniques, imagery etc.), then return to the text to check quotations and examples. Note and learn less essential vocabulary on subsequent readings. Your aim at this point should be to gain an overall sense and appreciation of the text; you should therefore concentrate on reading primary texts at this stage, although you may turn to some introductory critical works if you wish.
The texts for Paper III are short texts conceived as contrasting pairs. You will begin with, Montaigne, Racine, Diderot and Beckett in your first (Michaelmas) term. For tutorials and in preparation for the Preliminary examination you will write commentaries on extracts from each text (or for Baudelaire, a complete poem). The University does not specify editions; those indicated below are generally found useful by students, but you should be aware that you may encounter other editions in libraries, lectures and examinations. Tutors will be able to advise in particular circumstances.

1. Montaigne, ‘Des cannibales’ from the *Essais*; Diderot, *Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville* (Folio, ed. M. Delon)

The texts for Paper IV are French narrative fiction:


For tutorials and in preparation for the Preliminary examination you will write essays on these texts. The paper is examined entirely by essay, with candidates required to answer on *three* texts. There will be a choice of questions on each text, and candidates will be encouraged to make connections and comparisons between texts where appropriate.
