Dear Offer Holder,

First, let me say how pleased we are that Pembroke College has decided to offer you a place to read French from October 2020. This letter outlines the first, first-year, part of the Modern Languages course.

In your first three terms you will preparing for your Preliminary Examinations ('Prelims'), taken in June 2021. The language syllabus consists of grammar, translation from French to English, summary, and an oral examination (see Annexe A). For language, your priority should be to ensure that you can use the most generally-encountered grammatical structures and firm command of a wide vocabulary of common words and expressions. Accuracy matters: at the very least, you should know and be able to use the material in the grammars by Ferrar and/or Rowlinson 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) will be set to test your knowledge at the beginning of the first term.

For literature, see Annexe B. In 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 your language or languages and/or your other subject, at least once before term starts. 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, Paper III is not compulsory. But it is an important introduction to commentary on key texts, so EMEL students are encouraged to read them and to attend the seminars and tutorials.

For further information on all courses see http://www.mod-langs.ox.ac.uk/. Stay engaged with French language, literature or culture between now and the beginning of your course. Read, speak and experience things French as widely as possible. Covid is of course currently making travel difficult, but we hope to be back in real life in October, and it is important to get hard copies of the primary set texts, and a good grammar and a dictionary as it is on paper that texts are best read and learnt. You will be reading for a degree, and that is precisely what you are expected to do. Oxford 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, experiences, careers. Have a great summer, and we look forward to welcoming you here in October.

Tim Farrant M.A. D. Phil.
Senior Modern Languages Tutor, Fellow and Tutor in French
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Annexe A – French Preliminary Examination – Language

1. Syllabus

Language

Paper I (3hrs) Grammar Test 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. 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 IIB 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 Claire Seitz). Language teaching is provided mostly by her and by the College tutors, but the University French language instructor (Dr Michaël 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/). But the French Radio App (just Google to download) has just about every metropolitan French station, including France Bleu, Classical, Jazz, Rap etc. 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 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.
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 generally available online (Abebooks, chapitre.com etc.) or in Oxford and many other places from Blackwells 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.

**Paper III, Short Texts.** The texts are chosen, and examined, as contrasting pairs. We will study them chronologically, beginning with Montaigne, Racine, Diderot and N’Diaye in your first (Michaelmas) term, and finishing the paper with Baudelaire and Césaire in your second (Hilary) 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). If a particular edition is recommended it is important to use it, but you should be aware that you may encounter other editions in libraries, lectures, booksellers and online. Online versions may be old and/or unreliable, so you should obtain your own hard copies as recommended. Tutors will be able to advise in particular circumstances.

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

**Paper IV, Narrative Fiction**


We shall study these from the middle of Hilary to the middle of Trinity Term. For tutorials and in preparation for the Preliminary examination you will write essays on these texts.

In addition to those recommended for individual authors, you may find the following introductions useful: 1) **Histories** G. Duby, *Histoire de la France des*