UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Guide to Completing the Foundation Year Admissions Assessment

2022/23 Entry

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Introduction

This is an introduction to the Foundation Year Admissions Assessment used by the University of Cambridge. The assessment has been designed to assess your ability to think through a range of ideas and arguments, elucidating whether you have the skills required to complete the Foundation Year. It also allows us to consider Foundation Year applicants equally across a gathered field in your assessment performance, regardless of your educational background.

The assessment has been designed to allow you to demonstrate your suitability for the Foundation Year. Whilst you may feel nervous, you owe it to yourself to remain calm and to showcase your ability to us. You should be reassured that this is just one part of our admissions process, so an offer of a place does not rely solely on your performance in this assessment.

The assessment is not subject-specific although it covers material across the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. There is no curriculum content you will need to learn or revise for it in advance. Instead, the assessment will encourage you to showcase your current skills in response to a range of question prompts and activities.

Preparing for the assessment

Before you start the assessment, we strongly encourage you to familiarise yourself with the specification outlined in this document. This will help you to understand how the assessment is structured, how long you will have on each section and how you can access and complete the assessment. This document also includes some tips for completion which you may find helpful.

In addition to this document, there is a range of other materials to help you prepare. This includes a full sample paper and guidance videos. You can access this at www.foundationyear.cam.ac.uk/admissions-assessment

If you can, completing at least one timed run through the sample paper may help you. Since there are three options in each section, you could complete three different practice sessions if you wish.

It is possible to receive a version of the assessment that permits extra time on the timed sections for those with a Special Educational Need (25% extra). We can only issue this version if you have completed the Disability Form by 2 February 2022. You received this form and instructions to complete it in your acknowledgement email received soon after submitting your UCAS application.

Once you are ready to complete the official assessment, please ensure:

- You have a record of your key personal information to hand, including your UCAS ID, as you will be required to input this information into the Personal Information section;
- You are completing the assessment within the stated timeframe, ideally well before the deadline date for submission;
- You are completing the assessment in a location where you will not be disturbed and where you can focus;

- Your IT equipment is optimal, including having a good connection to WiFi and having your Laptop/PC connected to a reliable power source;
- Check that your speakers work and that you can hear the audio clearly;

You may want to keep a pen and paper handy to make notes as you go through.

If you do experience any technical problems when completing the assessment, please take a photo or screenshot of the screen and send that to us via email (foundation.year@admin.cam.ac.uk) with an explanation of the problem you have experienced and your UCAS ID.

Equally, if you are unable to complete the assessment online (i.e. because you do not have access to the right IT equipment, or as a result of a disability) please contact us as soon as possible (email: foundation.year@admin.cam.ac.uk) and we will make alternative arrangements for your assessment.

Instructions for Completion

Overview

The Foundation Year Admissions Assessment is divided into three sections:

- Section 1A: Reading Comprehension
- Section 1B: Listening Comprehension
- Section 2: Academic Writing and Argument

You will be required to complete all of these sections in the assessment; you will however have some options within each section with different questions or texts to choose from which will allow you to showcase your academic skills and interests. Each section will also include tips for completion which will provide support on how you may best approach the task in the section.

Sections 1A and 1B will be timed tasks, with 25 minutes in each section to review the content and answer the questions provided. If you finish the questions in that section before the timer runs out, you can click the arrow to proceed. If the timer runs out whilst you are still answering the questions the page will automatically proceed forward.

Section 2 is not time-limited, however, we do not expect you to spend longer than 90 minutes (1hr 30min) on the question.

You will not be able to revisit previous pages and answers in the assessment, as such you should ensure that you are happy with your responses on each page before clicking the proceed button.

Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct

The purpose of the assessment is for the University of Cambridge to determine your potential to thrive on the Foundation Year. As such, it is very important that all the work submitted as part of the assessment is your own and has been completed in a way that meets our requirements (i.e. within the time allocated if applicable and without the input of other people or plagiarism).

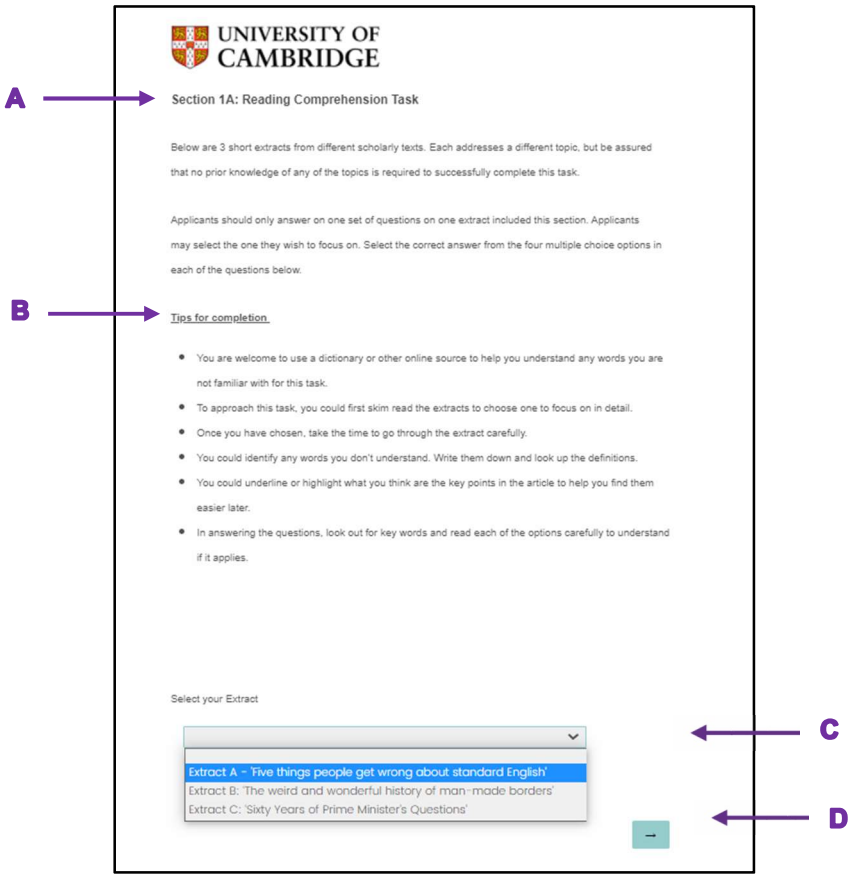
The timed sections of this assessment can be 'reset' by refreshing the page. However, to do so would be classed as academic misconduct. We will check how long you have spent on each section and if the evidence shows you have attempted to abuse the assessment in this way you will be automatically deselected from the admissions process.

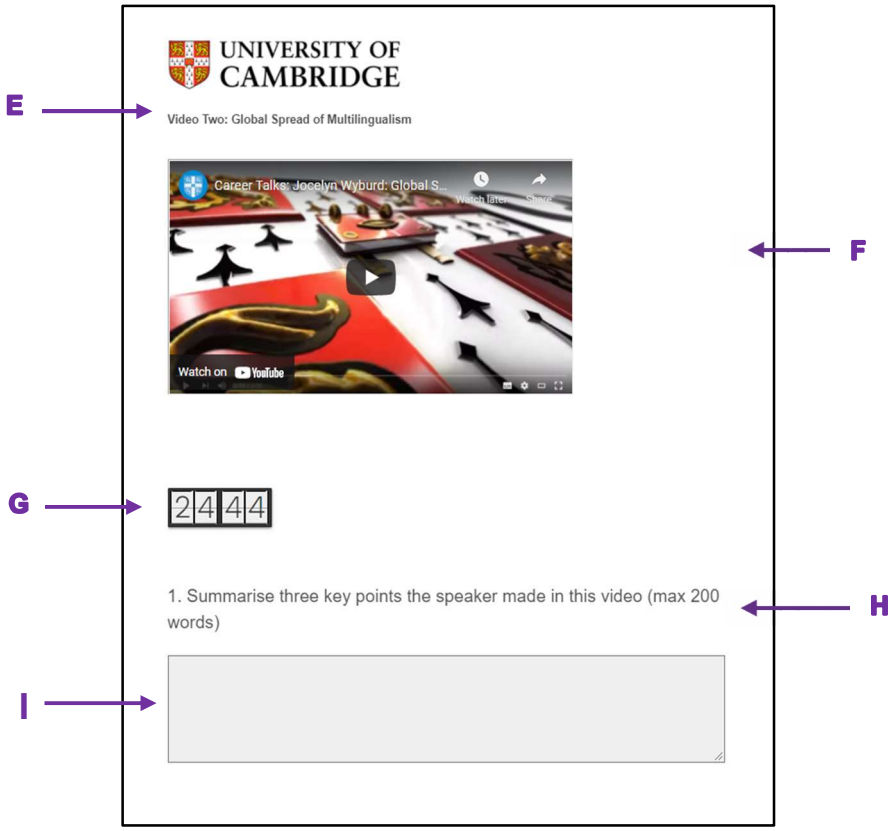
As such, please read the University's Definition of Academic Misconduct and ensure that you understand the academic rules of behaviour expected of you for completing the assessment.

Data Protection

The University of Cambridge and the Cambridge Colleges will use the personal information you have provided for the purpose of determining your suitability for the Foundation Year, processing your application and deciding whether to offer you a place for the course you have applied for. We will handle that information solely to assess your suitability for the Foundation Year and to compile any relevant internal statistics, and it will not be retained for longer than necessary for these purposes. This form uses the Qualtrics platform and appropriate measures are in place to ensure the security of the data and any documentation you submit. For further information on the use of your personal information during the application process, please see the University's Information Compliance website.

Example pages





	Feature	Notes
A	Current section	This highlights which of the sections you are viewing. You may also be on a new page within a section, but the section is indicated by the question number and description.
B	Tips for Completion	This text will appear at the beginning of each section and will provide support on how best to approach the section's tasks.
C	Topic Selection	This is where you will select which extract/video or question you would like to answer as part of the section.
D	Next Page	This button allows you to move to the next page of the assessment. If there are compulsory questions on that page, you won't be able to proceed until you have filled them in.
E	Topic Description	This text will confirm which extract/video or question you have selected to answer in that section.
F	Topic Content	This is an example of a video that you may select in Section 1B. For this, you can click the video within the page to start the video playing. You can also turn on closed captions (CC) to follow along with the subtitles.
G	Timer	Indicating how much time you have left in the section to complete the questions asked.
H	Question	This text will ask you a question related to the extract (1A) or video (1B) you have just viewed.
I	Answer Textbox	You may input your answer to the question asked in this box.

Moving Between Pages and Sections

You can use the 'Next Page' button – denoted as a forward arrow to navigate between the different sections. However, you will need to answer compulsory questions before being able to progress through. **You will not be able to go back and change your answers so please ensure you are happy with the responses you have given before continuing.**

The exact questions you will see in some sections will relate to the topic you have selected for that section.

Please note that the pages in the timed portions of the assessment (Sections 1A and 1B) will automatically proceed after 25 minutes. So make sure you have answered all the questions to the best of your ability before the timer concludes.

We recommend you access the assessment to ensure the link works for you soon after you receive it. **You MUST not proceed through the form unless you have completed the section as you will not be allowed to go back once you have seen the questions and the timer has begun.**

Accessing the Assessment

Initial access

The assessment will be sent to the email address you supplied in your UCAS application. In this email, you will be provided with a link to the online assessment which is personal to you and the date by which you must complete it. For 2022 entry, the deadline will be 5 pm GMT on 21 March 2022.

The email will be sent from camfoundationyear@gemailserver.com and will have the subject line 'Foundation Year Admissions Assessment 2022 entry'. We recommend that you add this email address to your 'safe senders list' and regularly check your email account (including your 'junk'/'spam' folder) in early March.

The email will contain a personalised link that is specific to you and your application. You should not share this link with anyone else as if you do they may have access to your answers and/or you could be found to have committed an act of academic misconduct and you may be removed from the process (see page 2).

When you first access the assessment, you will see an introductory page. We recommend you read this carefully, and you will need to agree to certain statements on academic conduct and data protection before being able to proceed.

We recommend you access the assessment to ensure the link works for you soon after you receive it. **However, you MUST not proceed through the form as you will not be allowed to go back once you have seen the questions and the timer has begun.** You may disadvantage your application by doing this, and you will not be allowed to complete the assessment a second time.

Subsequent access and completing the assessment

You can return to the assessment where you left off using the link in your initial email.

You can tackle the sections one at a time or in one long sitting. However, if you start a timed section, you must complete that timed section in that session as you cannot return to it. Once you have completed a section, you will not be able to access it again or change the answers that you provided.

If you believe that there was an error in your submission as a result of technical difficulties, please email us with a description of the problem at foundation.year@admin.cam.ac.uk. We can access detailed records on what you have seen and how long you have spent on the form, but we cannot re-issue the assessment once you have started it or issue you a different assessment to complete.

See also Frequently Asked Questions (page 13)

- *I've submitted my assessment but forgot to edit my question response(s), is there any way I can resubmit?*
- *The page proceeded before I had finished answering the questions in that section, what should I do?*
- *I accidentally refreshed one of the timed assessment portions, how should I proceed?*

Personal Information

Section Summary

This page asks you some general questions about yourself which will help us to link this form to your UCAS application.

1.1 * First/given name

Please enter your first name and middle name(s) exactly as they are stated on official documents, such as your passport, birth certificate or driving licence.

1.2 * Surname/family name

Please enter your last name(s) in the box exactly as they are stated on official documents, such as your passport, birth certificate or driving licence.

1.3 * UCAS ID

Your UCAS Personal ID is the unique number that UCAS allocates to your application. It has ten digits and is displayed in 123-456- 7890 format on every email UCAS send you and you use it to log in on UCAS. Input it here without the dashes (i.e. 1234567890). You will be unable to enter more than 10 characters in this field. If you have forgotten your UCAS Personal ID, please contact UCAS Customer Services (telephone: 0371 468 0 468) or refer to UCAS Track (https://track.ucas.com/TroubleLoggingIn).

1.4 * Email address

This should be the same email address you have given in your UCAS application.

Once completing this section, you will proceed to the assessment, starting with Section 1A the Reading Comprehension task.

Section 1A: Reading Comprehension Task

Section Summary

In Section 1A: Reading Comprehension, you will be provided with an option of three short extracts from different academic sources. You must select one extract to be assessed on. No prior knowledge of the

subject matter is required in the selection of an extract as the task is intended to assess your ability to read and understand a text, rather than testing your knowledge of a subject.

Once you have selected the extract you would like to be assessed on, you will proceed onto the next page where you will have 25 minutes to read the extract and then answer a series of multiple-choice questions based upon the extract. Those with Special Educational Needs will have 25% extra time (see page 3).

After you have answered all of the questions on the extract, you may click the 'next page' button at the bottom of the page (see page 5) to proceed onto the next section. Please note that the page will automatically proceed after the time allotted for this section has elapsed, so please make sure you have answered all the questions to the best of your ability before the timer concludes.

Tips for Section 1A

- You may select the extract that you think is closest to the subjects you have studied before. However, all the topics are designed to be unfamiliar. Even if you have studied a similar subject before, prior knowledge of the subject itself won't help you answer the questions as they relate specifically to the extract.
- It may seem a sensible approach to choose an extract that is on a subject related to things you have studied before. It might use terms you are familiar with. However, you should still take care. For example, is a term you are familiar with being used with the same meaning in this context? Is your prior knowledge proving a distraction from what is in front of you?
- In choosing your extract, you should expect to apply your prior learning in quite broad terms. For example, if you have studied subjects like Sociology, Politics, Law, History, Criminology, you might choose an extract described as 'discussing protest movements'.
- It is not possible to 'check' the extracts and go back to choose another one if you decide you would prefer an alternative. The timer starts when you select one.
- If the extract you choose is not exactly as you might have expected, you should keep calm, focus and do your best. Remember – no subject knowledge is necessary and you are meant to be reading something new and unfamiliar.
- We advise not agonising over the choice of extract because you'll only waste energy and reduce your ability to do your best.
- You can choose how to approach this section according to your preferences, but one suggested approach is to read it through once to get the general meaning. Then, if there are words you don't understand in the extract, look them up to aid your understanding. Then, read through again more carefully. With a pen and paper, you could note down the key points.
- Read the questions carefully. If you can't answer them immediately, try to identify the section the answer is likely to be in and return to that to find the answer. Sometimes it will be easy to rule out one or two of the possible answers. If you think that is the case, do this then focus on the most likely options.
- Focus only on what is in front of you. Read each question and all the possible answers carefully to distinguish what is being asked and what the answer will be.

- There is a timer on the page so you can check to see how long you have left. It should be achievable to complete this task within the time allowed. If you finish before the timer runs out, you can click the arrow to proceed. If the timer runs out while you are answering, then the page will automatically proceed forward. If you are running out of time and aren't sure about an answer, ensure you have something selected for each question even if you are still thinking it over. Then if you run out of time, there is a chance you might have selected the right answer.

See also Frequently Asked Questions (page 13)

- *Can I change my choice of Extract after proceeding to the question page?*
- *What do I do if I have I have no experience with the extract topics?*
- *Can I use additional resources to inform my understanding of the extract text?*

Section 1B: Listening Comprehension

In Section 1B: Listening Comprehension you will be provided with the option of selecting one of three short videos featuring academics discussing some key academic concepts and ideas in brief. Again, no prior knowledge of the subject content is required to complete the task, instead, we would like to see evidence of your ability to consider and digest unfamiliar academic approaches.

Once you have selected the video extract you would like to be assessed on, you will proceed onto the next page. Similar to Section 1A, in 1B you will have 25 minutes to watch the video and answer the questions provided on the video content. As before, those with Special Educational Needs will have 25% extra time (see page 3). You will be asked to provide a written response to the question prompts, rather than answering multiple-choice questions as in Section 1A.

The video is hosted on YouTube, and you can use closed captions to help you follow along. It is important to note that some school/college IT networks block YouTube content. **You should confirm you will be able to play the video by playing the test video on the front page of the assessment before you begin.**

After you have answered all of the questions in this section, you may click the 'next page' button at the bottom of the page (see page 5) to proceed to the next section. Please note that the page will automatically proceed after the time allotted for this section has elapsed, so please make sure you have answered all the questions to the best of your ability before the timer concludes.

Tips for Section 1B

- You may select the video that focuses on a topic that you think is closest to what you might have studied before. As before, you shouldn't worry if you don't think any of the options directly link to your previous studies because no prior knowledge is required.

- You could choose to read the questions before you play the video for the first time so you know what to listen out for.

- You should listen carefully. You can play it a few times if you need to, but remember that your time is limited. As such, it might be better to return just to certain sections of it for clarity by skipping forward using your cursor on the player.

- Making notes as you listen will help you to frame your answers. A pen and paper is likely the easiest way to do this while you listen, but you could also type into a different window.

- If you struggle to hear the speaker for any reason, you can switch on Closed Captions using the 'CC' icon on the player to follow along with subtitles.

- In your written answers to the questions, you should take the same care and attention to detail that you would any assessed work such as an essay or examination. Avoid slang terms or abbreviations and take care with your spelling and grammar.

See also Frequently Asked Questions (page 13)

- *The audio isn't working on the video, what do I do?*
- *I experienced issues with the video playing (ie. freezing) can I retake the section?*

Section 2: Academic Writing and Argument

Section Summary

In this section, you will be required to select an essay title or question which will form the basis of your essay response. This essay should be between 800-1,000 words and should take you around 1hr – 1hr 30min in total to complete.

You will see all three potential essay titles listed and you can choose the topic you think you can perform the best on. You must only complete one essay as part of this assessment.

Unlike the previous sections, Section 2 will not be timed. However, we do strongly encourage you to stick to the suggested timings for Section 2 (90 minutes) to reflect your ability to assimilate new knowledge and provide critical analysis of the topic. You can leave and return to this page since there is no timer, but remember that you must not seek outside help from friends, parents or teachers as that would be classed as academic misconduct. Your response will also be checked for evidence of plagiarism using computer software.

You may enter your response to the essay question directly in the text box or, if you would prefer, you may write your response in a separate document, then copy and paste your response into the text box once you're happy to submit your essay.

There will also be some suggested reading for the essay topic that you can read by opening a new tab or window. This is provided to broaden your understanding of the question subject and you are not required to engage with these texts critically as part of your essay.

After you complete your response, you can proceed using the forward arrow. This confirms the completion and submission of your assessment and you will not be able to review your full responses again.

Tips for Section 2

- This section isn't time-limited, but we don't expect you to spend longer than 90 minutes. The longer you spend, the smaller the improvements you can realistically make, and you might make it worse if you spend too long tweaking it.

- The recommended reading is just intended to help get you thinking about the topic, but you should avoid just recapping it. We want to hear your thoughts, not just a summary of others.

- You are not required or expected to do any additional research. However, we would encourage you to draw on any ideas that are informed by things you have studied in school/college or your independent reading and study. If that doesn't seem to apply, please be reassured that you still have the opportunity to impress us with your ideas and writing.

- As with any essay, it is a very good idea to start writing out your ideas on paper before starting to write them up fully. You could 'mind map' your response if that is helpful to you.

- You could type your response into a word processor first and then just copy and paste across to the answer window. This may help with spelling and grammar checks, but as with any essay, you can't rely completely on computer software.

- It is a short essay so it is very likely you won't be able to say everything you want to or cover all angles on the topic. So, you might like to choose a few strong points and then explain them. If you have only one thing to say and just repeat it, that won't be a strong argument. Similarly, cramming in lots of half-explained ideas won't make a very strong argument either.

- It is important that we can understand your meaning. You don't need to use very formal language or technical words to impress us.

- You should take the same care and attention to detail that you would any assessed work such as an essay or examination. Avoid slang terms or abbreviations and take care with your spelling and grammar.

- Before submitting, take one full read through to double-check your structure, spelling and grammar one last time and confirm you are happy with your response to our essay prompt.

See also Frequently Asked Questions (page 13)

- *Can a teacher or family member read my response for feedback before I submit?*
- *Can I submit a PDF or word document instead of using the text box provided?*

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the purpose of the Foundation Year Admissions Assessment?

The purpose of the admissions process for the Foundation Year is to review key academic competencies as a gathered field. This is always challenging, but particularly so with a varied field composed of those with a range of qualifications, qualification combinations, and educational backgrounds. As such, a written pre-interview assessment gives all shortlisted candidates the best opportunity to showcase their skills. Ultimately, we feel this element of the process will assist us in better consideration of the applicant's suitability for learning on both the Foundation Year and upon progression to undergraduate study at the University of Cambridge.

I've submitted my assessment but forgot to edit my question response(s), is there any way I can resubmit?

Unfortunately, you are unable to change or edit any of your responses to the assessment questions once you have submitted them. We therefore strongly encourage you to read through all of your answers carefully before page proceeding and submitting the assessment.

The page proceeded before I had finished answering the questions in that section, what should I do?

Sections 1A & 1B have a 25-minute timer for responses to the section questions (slightly longer for those with SEN). Once the time has elapsed, the page will automatically proceed onto the next section. This is noted at the beginning of each section.

If you believe that the page proceeded before the timer concluded, please do let us know as soon as possible as we can check to confirm you had the time allotted.

I accidentally refreshed one of the timed assessment portions, how should I proceed?

Please email foundation.year@admin.cam.ac.uk if this has occurred so we may investigate the instance to determine whether your refreshing of the page violates our plagiarism agreement for the assessment.

Can I change my choice of extract after proceeding to the question page?

It will not be possible for you to change your choice of extract after selecting one of the options and proceeding onto the relevant extract page and seeing the related questions. You should therefore consider carefully which extract you think you could answer to the best of your ability before submitting your extract choice.

What do I do if I have I have no experience with the extract topics?

All extracts will likely be unfamiliar to you by design as we want to understand how you comprehend and interpret new ideas and concepts. Prior knowledge of the subject matter will not impact how well you perform in answering the section questions.

Can I use additional resources to inform my understanding of the texts?

Yes, you may use additional resources like a dictionary or thesaurus to inform your response to the assessment questions and topics.

The audio isn't working on the video, what do I do?

Before starting the assessment you should ensure that the equipment you are using is operationally functional (please see page 3 for further guidance). If you are unable to hear the video extract in Section 1B, you may select the caption function on the video so you may read the subtitles.

I experienced issues with the video playing (i.e. freezing) can I retake the section?

If you are experiencing technical issues whilst completing a section. Please screenshot the page and send an email to foundation.year@admin.cam.ac.uk outlining the problem you are having so we may investigate further. Do not continue with the assessment until we confirm that you may do so.

Can a teacher or family member read my responses for feedback before I submit them?

No, you may not have any help or assistance from another person whilst you are completing the assessment. If you do, this will be constituted as collusion, which is a violation of the academic conduct agreement you affirmed at the beginning of the assessment. A consequence of this action will be your deselection from admission consideration for the Foundation Year.

Can I submit a PDF or word document instead of using the text boxes provided?

You may not upload a PDF or Word document. Instead, if you have drafted your essay response in another format, you can copy and paste your response directly into the section text box.

My Admissions Assessment isn't displaying correctly on my computer screen; how can I correct it?

The form should be functional and consistent across the most popular modern web browsers. We recommend using one of the following browsers:

- Apple Safari
- Google Chrome
- Microsoft Edge (Chromium version)
- Microsoft Internet Explorer
- Mozilla Firefox

Versions of these browsers no longer supported by their maker may not function as intended and may expose the user to inherent security vulnerabilities. We recommend that users always use the most up-to-date version of their browser. If you are having difficulty with the display of the assessment, please try clearing cookies or an alternative machine.

What if I require a hard copy of the assessment?

If you require a hard copy of the assessment you should let us know as soon as possible so we can provide it for you. Please note we will expect a school or college to invigilate the timed sections if you are completing a hard copy examination.

Receiving emails from the University of Cambridge

The University and Foundation Year team will send important information and reminders to the email address that you have provided. Your email account must be configured correctly so that emails sent from the University are not rejected or filtered into your 'junk'/'spam' folder by your email provider. Your application to the University of Cambridge may be disadvantaged if you do not take the steps described below.

The University may contact you about your admissions assessment using the following email addresses:

- foundation.year@admin.cam.ac.uk
- camfoundationyear@qemailserver.com

Please ensure that all of the above email addresses are:

- added to your email account's Contact List
- added to your email account's Safe Sender List (if available)
- removed from your email account's Blocked Sender List

Help for some of the more commonly used email providers can be found at the links below.

Hotmail/Windows Mail/Outlook	http://windows.microsoft.com/en-gb/windows/outlook-help
BT Internet/Yahoo	www.help.yahoo.com/kb/helpcentral
Apple Mail	www.apple.com/support/mac-apps/mail/
Google Mail	www.support.google.com/mail
AOL	https://help.aol.co.uk/contact

Further Help

If you have any further enquiries relating to how to complete the Foundation Year Admissions Assessment or you have a technical question about completing your assessment please consult the Foundation Year team (email: foundation.year@admin.cam.ac.uk). This guide is accompanied by video resources which you can access at www.foundationyear.cam.ac.uk/admissions-assessment

Cambridge Admissions Office
Student Services Centre
New Museums Site
Cambridge CB2 3PT
Email: foundation.year@admin.cam.ac.uk

Details are correct at the time of publication (November 2021) but should be checked against the Undergraduate Study website for the most up-to-date information. © University of Cambridge, 2021.