



UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE

Guide to Completing the Foundation Year Admissions Assessment

2024/25 Entry

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Introduction

The University of Cambridge uses a Foundation Year Admissions Assessment to assess your ability to think through a range of ideas and arguments and show whether you have the skills required to complete the Foundation Year. Assessment performance also allows us to consider applicants equally across a gathered field.

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 to best showcase your ability. You should be reassured that this is just one part of our process. An offer of a place does not rely solely on your performance in this assessment.

The assessment covers material across the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. There is nothing 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 to spend on each section and how you can access and complete the assessment. This document also includes some tips.

Other materials are available 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 options in each section, you could complete different practice sessions if you wish.

Those with Special Educational Needs can receive adjustments for this assessment (see page 7). In order to put this in place, you need to fill in the FY Adjustments & Allowances Form by 9 February 2024.

Once you are ready to complete the 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 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 can focus and not be disturbed;
- Your IT equipment has a stable internet connection you are connected to a reliable power source;
- You can hear audio clearly, and you aren't using a device or connection that will block YouTube videos (like some school networks).

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.

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).

Instructions for Completion

Overview

The Foundation Year Admissions Assessment is divided into three sections:

- Section 1: Reading Comprehension
- Section 2: Listening Comprehension

You will be required to complete both 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.

Both sections of the assessment are time-limited. The email with a link to complete the assessment will clearly stipulate how long you should spend on each section. In both cases, you should use that time to review the content and answer the questions provided. You must set your own timer (for example using a watch, clock or phone) and submit your answers by the time your time has elapsed.

Most applicants will have 60 minutes to complete Section 1, and 60 minutes to complete Section 2. Students who completed the Adjustments and Allowances Form on time will receive more time according to their needs.

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 and without the input of other people or plagiarism).

We will check how long you have spent on each section and if the evidence shows you have attempted to abuse the assessment by taking longer than the time allotted to you, you will be automatically deselected from the admissions process.

You can use whatever resources you wish (for example, dictionaries or online sources) to help you, including assistive technologies for disabilities if required. However, you should not use AI (such as ChatGPT) or tools which enhance texts beyond spelling and grammar checks (such as Quillbot).

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

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Section 1: Reading Comprehension

In this section, we are assessing:

- Your potential for critical analysis, for example, grasping complex new ideas and showing flexibility and creativity;
- Your academic communication skills, for example, understanding an argument and engaging with it;
- Your potential to assimilate knowledge, for example, your ability to recognise and understand new information and apply it;
- Your conscientiousness, for example, your diligence in carefully completing the tasks as requested;

Below are 3 different texts of around 1,000 words. Each addresses a different topic but be assured that no prior knowledge of any of the topics is required to successfully complete this task.

Applicants will only be able to answer one set of questions on one extract included in this section. Applicants may select the one they wish to focus on. Once selected, you will proceed onto the next page where you will see some multiple choice and open form questions related to the extract you have selected.

Select your Extract

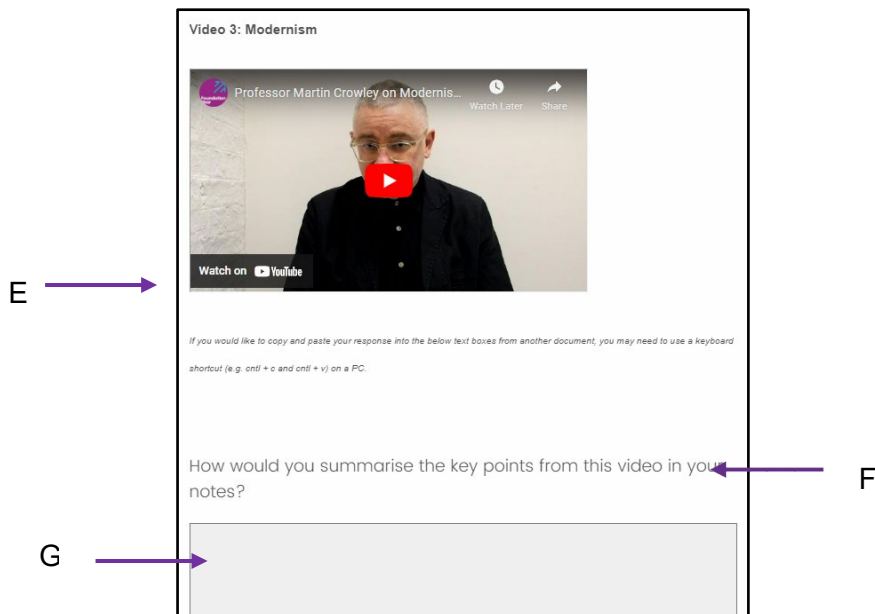
Extract A: An article looking at learning languages

Extract B: An article looking at the trade union movement

Extract C: An article that discusses social stigma and the power of literature

I confirm

→



	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	Description text	This text will appear at the beginning of each section and will provide instructions which you should read
C	Topic Selection	This is where you will select which option 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. Note there is no back button on this assessment – you can only move forwards.
E	Topic Content	This is an example of a video that you may select in Section 2. 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.
F	Question	This text will ask you a question related to the extract (section 1) or video (section b).
G	Answer Textbox	You may input your answer to the question asked in this box. It may have a word count. Other answers may be a multiple choice text box.

Moving Between Pages and Sections

You can use the 'Next Page' button – denoted as a forward arrow to navigate between the different sections. You may need to answer compulsory questions before being able to continue. **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 what you have selected for that section.

Please note that you need to time yourself in both sections and should ensure you click proceed after the given time has passed.

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 are ready to complete it as you cannot go back once the content has been revealed.

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 2024 entry, **the deadline is 5PM GMT on 18 March 2024**. Failure to submit a completed assessment by this time will mean your application can't be taken further.

The email will be sent from camfoundationyear@gmailserver.com and will have the subject line 'Foundation Year Admissions Assessment 2024 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 4).

When you first access the assessment, you will see an introductory page. We recommend you read this carefully. You will need to agree to 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. You **MUST** not proceed through the form unless you are ready to complete it as you cannot go back once the content has been revealed. 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 using the link in the email you received.

You can tackle the sections on the same day or on different days, and you can take a break in between. However, if you start a timed section (see below), you must complete that section 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 a technical error, 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, but we cannot allow you to re-try a section you have already seen.

Time to complete (and Special Educational Needs)

The structure of the assessment is as follows:

- Personal information
- Instructions and options for Section 1
- Section 1 questions
- Instructions and options for Section 2
- Section 2 questions

You can spend as long as you wish on the 'Personal Information' and 'Instructions and options' pages. However, you must complete the 'questions' pages in the allotted time. You are responsible for timing yourself and submitting it within the allotted time.

The standard time permitted for each section is 60 minutes. Additional time is available for those with Special Educational Needs, providing that we received the FY Adjustments and Allowances Form by 9 February 2024.

The email with the link to complete the assessment will inform you how much time you have for each section and you must ensure you stick to it.

Personal Information

Section Summary

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

1.1 * First/given name

Please enter your first name as given on your UCAS application..

1.2 * Surname/family name

Please enter your last name(s) as given on your UCAS application.

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 ID, please contact UCAS Customer Services (telephone: 0371 468 0 468).

1.4 * Email address

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

On completion of this section, you will proceed to Section 1: Reading Comprehension.

Section 1: Reading Comprehension

Section Summary

In Section 1, you will be provided with an option of three extract titles from different sources. You must select one extract to be assessed on. No prior knowledge of the subject discussed in the extract is required as the task is intended to assess your ability to read and understand a text and respond to it, rather than test prior subject knowledge.

Once you have selected the extract you would like to be assessed on, you will proceed onto the next page where you should use the time you have been allocated to read the extract and then answer a series of multiple-choice and text-based questions on the extract.

You are responsible for timing yourself. You can use a watch, phone, clock or any other device. We will be confirming submission has been made within the allotted time and those found to have exceeded will be deselected.

After you have answered all of the questions, you must click the 'next page' button at the bottom of the page (see page 5-6) to proceed onto the next section.

This section tests your ability to read a new text, understand its meaning, and offer responses informed by it. It emulates reading preparation for classes.

Tips for Section 1

- You may wish 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 topic, prior knowledge won't help you answer the questions as they relate specifically to the extract.
- If the extract is similar to something you've studied before 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'.
- There is little benefit in agonising over the choice of extract. They are intended to be accessible to all regardless of prior knowledge.
- 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 and click the forward arrow to see it.
- If the extract you choose is not 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 unfamiliar.
- You can choose how to approach this section. One suggested approach is to read it through once to get the general meaning. If there are words you don't understand in the extract, look them up to

aid your understanding. Then, read it again more carefully. With a pen and paper, you could note down the key points.

- Read the questions with care and focus only on what is in front of you. If you can't answer immediately, try to identify where the answer is likely to be and return to that to find the answer, or jot down some thoughts. In multiple choice, sometimes it will be easy to rule out some of the possible answers. If you think that is the case, do this then focus on the remaining options.
- This is not a research task. There is no benefit to finding the original source material online and reading it in full, or to researching the subject to inform your answers. We are assessing your response to this extract and this extract only.

Section 2: Listening Comprehension

In Section 2: Listening Comprehension you will be provided with the option of selecting one of two short videos featuring academics discussing some 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 extract you would like to be assessed on, you will proceed onto the next page where you should use the time you have been allocated to listen to the video, and then answer a series of text-based questions on it.

You are responsible for timing yourself. You can use a watch, phone, clock or any other device. We will be confirming submission has been made within the allotted time and those found to have exceeded will be deselected.

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, you must click the 'next page' button at the bottom of the page to finish your assessment.

This section tests your ability to listen to ideas, make notes on them and respond to the ideas. It emulates being in a class such as a lecture.

Tips for Section 2

- 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 link to your previous studies because no prior knowledge is required and we have chosen concepts that will be unfamiliar.

- 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 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. You might also 'mind map' some ideas before composing your response for some questions.
- 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. It is also important that we can understand your meaning. You don't need to use very formal language or technical words to impress us.
- This is not a research task. There is no benefit to researching the subject to inform your answers.

After the assessment

On completion, you will see a blank page that says 'You have now completed the Foundation Year Admissions Assessment'. You should also receive an email thanking you for your submission (but it may go to your junk folder).

To preserve the integrity of the assessment, you will not receive a copy of your answers until after the deadline for completion of the assessment has passed. After that date (and before your interviews) you will receive a copy of your answers via email in case you want to look over them or keep a record.

You **MUST** not to disclose the content of your assessment to others as it could impact on the integrity of the assessment.

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 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 proceeding and submitting the assessment.

Can I work in other tabs or windows during the assessment?

You can do this, but we suggest not doing this as it makes you more likely to accidentally close the tab and then need to take time to reopen and you might lose answers. Bear in mind that research isn't required for either of the tasks.

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

It will not be possible for you to change your choice of extract or video after selecting one of the options and proceeding onto the relevant page and seeing the related questions. You should therefore think carefully before making your choice.

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

All of the topics will likely be unfamiliar to you. 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. You are forbidden from using AI tools like ChatGPT, or writing tools that offer any assistance beyond spelling and grammar (e.g. paraphrasing or tone change).

I forgot to start my timer, it stopped working, or I didn't notice the time. Will I be penalised for taking longer than my allotted time?

You are responsible for timing yourself, and we reserve the right to deselect any candidate we deem has not completed the assessment as stipulated. We apply this reasonably: you won't be penalised for going seconds over your allotted time. However, we will review how long all candidates spend and reserve the right to remove any candidate who we believe has not followed the instructions.

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. If you are unable to hear the video extract in Section 2, 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.

You may not be permitted to re-take this section and may need to take an alternative task instead.

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.

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. Please note we will expect a school or college to invigilate 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@gmailserver.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.

Email provider	Link
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

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

Details are correct at the time of publication (March 2024) but should be checked against the Cambridge Foundation Year website for the most up-to-date information. © University of Cambridge, 2024.