Guide to completing the Foundation Year Admissions Assessment

2026/27 Entry

Contents

Introduction

The University of Cambridge uses an Admissions Assessment to assess your ability to think through various 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 should remember that this is just one part of the process and 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 respond to a range of prompt material.

Preparing for the assessment

Before you start the assessment, we encourage you to familiarise yourself with the specifications outlined in this document. This covers:

- how the assessment is structured and what each task involves
- how long you should spend on each section
- how to access and complete the assessment?

This document also includes tips to help you do your best. Other materials are available to help you prepare. This includes a sample paper and guidance videos. Find these at
www.foundationyear.cam.ac.uk/admissions-assessment

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

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

- You have your UCAS ID available, as you will be required to input this;
- You are completing the assessment within the stated timeframe.
- You are completing the assessment in a location where you can focus and not be disturbed;
- Your IT equipment has a stable internet connection and 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

We recommend that you keep a pen and paper handy to make notes as you go through, and a way of timing yourself to keep on track.

If you cannot 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 get in touch with us as soon as possible (email: foundation.year@admin.cam.ac.uk).

Instructions for Completion

Overview

The Foundation Year Admissions Assessment is divided into sections:

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

You will be required to complete both sections in the assessment and both are time limited. The email with a link to complete the assessment will stipulate how long you should spend on each section. Use the time to review the content and answer the questions. You must set your own timer (for example using a watch, clock or phone) and submit your answers when the 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 essential 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 other people's input or plagiarism).

We will check how long you have spent. If the evidence shows you have attempted to abuse the assessment by taking longer than the allotted time, you will receive a mark penalty. In extreme cases, you could be deselected from the admissions process.

You can use whatever resources you wish (for example, dictionaries) to help you, including assistive technologies for disabilities (e.g. speech to text).

You may use spelling and grammar checkers.

You should not use generative AI. This includes using tools to make **changes to tone or style** (e.g Grammarly or QuillBot)

Please read the University's Definition of Academic Misconduct and ensure you understand the academic rules of behaviour expected of you to complete the assessment.

Data Protection

The University of Cambridge and the Cambridge Colleges will use the personal information you have provided to determine your suitability for the Foundation Year, process your application, and decide 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. The assessment uses the Qualtrics platform and appropriate measures are in place to ensure data security. 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

A →

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;

B →

- 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 |

← C

change my extract option and that this is a timed activity.

○ I confirm

[→] ← D

Video 3: Modernism

Professor Martin Crowley on Modernis...

E →

If you would like to copy and paste your response into the below text boxes from another document, you may need to use a keyboard shortcut (e.g. cntl + c and cntl + v) on a PC.

How would you summarise the key points from this video in your notes? ← F
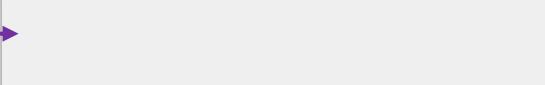
G →
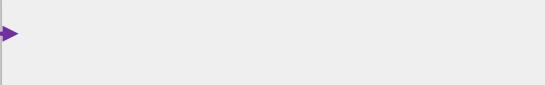
	Feature	Notes
A	Current section	This highlights which of the sections you are viewing. You may also be on a new page within a section, but the question number and description indicate the section.
B	Description text	This text will appear at the beginning of each section and will provide instructions 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 that this assessment has no back button – you can only move forward.
E	Topic Content	This is an example of a video that you may select in Section 2. To do this, you can click the video on 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, which is denoted as a forward arrow, to navigate between the different sections. **You will not be able to go back and change your answers, so please ensure you are happy with your responses before continuing.**

The questions you will see may depend on the options you have selected earlier in the assessment.

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 which is personal to you. **The deadline for completion is 5 PM GMT on 1 March 2026.** 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@qemailserver.com and will have the subject line 'Foundation Year Admissions Assessment 2026 entry'.

You should not share your personalised assessment link with anyone else as if you do, they may have access to your answers, and/or you could be found to have committed academic misconduct (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 unless you are ready to complete it, as you cannot return once the content has been revealed.

Subsequent access and completing the assessment

You can return to the assessment using the link in the email. You can tackle the sections on the same day or on different days and take a break in between. However, if you start a timed section (see below), you must complete it as you cannot return to it. Once you have completed a section, you cannot reaccess it or change the answers you provided.

Timing for each section (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. You can also leave the website at these points and return later. However, if you are in one of the 'questions' sections, you must complete it in the time you are allowed.

There will not be any clock in the assessment window itself, and it will not automatically forward when your time is up. Therefore, **you are responsible for timing yourself and submitting it within the allotted time**. You could use a watch, your phone or a clock to do this.

The email with the link to complete the assessment will inform you how much time you have for each section. For most, the time permitted is 60 minutes for Section 1 and 60 minutes for Section 2. Additional time will be provided as appropriate to those with Special Educational Needs

We check how long you have spent on each section. If you take longer than the allotted time, you will receive a mark penalty, and in extreme cases, you could be deselected from the admissions process.

Personal Information

Section Summary

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

You will need to enter:

- Your first/given name (as given on your UCAS application)
- Your surname/family name (as given on your UCAS application).
- Your UCAS ID (this has ten digits and is displayed in on every email UCAS sends you, and you use it to log in to UCAS.)

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. 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. 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.

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

You are responsible for timing yourself.

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

Tips for Section 1

- We recommend you choose the topic you think sounds most interesting. You might also choose one that you feel is closest to the subjects you have studied before. However, we expect all topics will be new to candidates. And, 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, or Criminology, you might choose an extract described as 'discussing protest movements'.

- There is little benefit in agonising over the choice of extract as they are designed to be accessible to all regardless of prior knowledge. They are all roughly the same length and have definitions of potentially unfamiliar terms and comparable 'readability' scores suitable for your education level.

- It is not possible to 'check' the extracts and go back to choose another one if you 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 expected, 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, reread it 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.

- This is <u>not</u> 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 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 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 topics.

Once you have selected the video you wish to see, you will proceed to 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.

The video is hosted on YouTube. 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 at the start of Section 2.**

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

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

Tips for Section 2

- You may select the video you think is closest to what you might have studied. But you shouldn't worry if you don't think any of the options link to your previous studies because no prior knowledge is required.

- Each video is around 8 minutes long. You will need to focus as you listen, but you can pause if necessary.

- We recommend making use of the subtitles on the video to help you follow the speaker. You can switch on Closed Captions using the 'CC' icon on the player to follow along with subtitles.

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

- You can play it a few times if needed 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 recall what you heard when you compose your answer. A pen and paper is likely the easiest way to do this while you listen.

- The response requested in this section is long-form (not shorter questions). For clarity in your response, we strongly recommend planning your response before you sit down to write it. You might organise by choosing what each paragraph might focus on, or you could create a 'mind map' of your ideas.

- You should take the same care and attention to detail that you would any assessed work such as an essay or examination. It is also important that we can understand your meaning. Avoid slang terms or abbreviations, and take care of your spelling and grammar.

- On the other hand, you don't need to use very formal language or technical words to impress us. Communicating your best ideas directly is much better than using words you may not understand and writing complicated sentences.

- 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 page that says, 'You have now completed the Foundation Year Admissions Assessment'. You should also receive an email thanking you for your submission.

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

For the same reason, you will not receive a copy of your answers until after the assessment deadline has passed. We will email you a copy of your answers in the week before your interview.

Technical problems

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

We can access detailed records on what you have seen and how long you have spent, but we cannot allow you to retry a section you have already seen.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the purpose of the Foundation Year Admissions Assessment?

Assessing key academic competencies is challenging, particularly in a varied field composed of those with various qualifications, qualification combinations, and educational backgrounds. As such, a pre-interview assessment gives all shortlisted candidates an 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 during 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 it?

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

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

You can do this, but experience shows it makes you more likely to close the tab accidentally. Doing this might cause you to lose part of your work and valuable time. Bear in mind that research isn't required for either of the tasks.

After proceeding to the question page, can I change my choice of extract or video?

No, you cannot change your choice of extract or video after you proceed to the questions page. You should, therefore, think carefully before making your choice and do your best with what you choose.

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

All topics will likely be unfamiliar! 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 resources like a dictionary to inform your response to the assessment questions and topics. You are forbidden from using generative AI tools like ChatGPT or writing tools that offer assistance beyond spelling and grammar (e.g. paraphrasing or tone change).

I forgot to start my timer, it stopped working, or I overlooked 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 apply mark deductions where candidates have exceeded the time allowed.

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

Before starting the assessment you should ensure that your equipment is operationally functional. If you are unable to hear the video extract in Section 2, you should check the sound settings and volume on your device. You can select the caption function for the video subtitles.

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

See 'Technical problems' on page 11. You may not be permitted to re-take this section and may need to take an alternative task.

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

No, you may not have any help or assistance from another person. If you do, this is collusion, which is a violation of the academic conduct agreement you affirmed at the beginning of the assessment. This action will result in 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.

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 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

Further Help

If you have any further enquiries relating to how to complete the Foundation Year Admissions Assessment or if you have a technical question about completing your assessment, please contact 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 (11 February 2026) but should be checked against the Cambridge Foundation Year website for the most up-to-date information. © University of Cambridge, 2026.