



UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE

MODERN AND MEDIEVAL LANGUAGES
ADMISSIONS ASSESSMENT

CONTENT SPECIFICATION

How to prepare for the Modern and Medieval Languages Written Assessment

What is the assessment?

You can expect to take the one hour written assessment for MML at the College where you will be interviewed. Remember that it is only one part of our assessment of you as a candidate, alongside the interviews, schoolwork (if your College has requested it) and everything else we get to know about you from your application form.

Take a look at the sample assessments below. You'll see that answers involve writing in both an MML language that you want to study here (Section A), as well as in English (Section B).

Why write in the foreign language?

In Section A of the assessment you are asked to respond in a language you wish to study here at Cambridge. If you are applying to study two languages which you are studying for A-levels or equivalents, then you can choose to respond in either language (not both). If you're applying to study one language you're already studying and a language you'll be starting from scratch, then you should respond in the language you are already studying. It is not a fill-the-gaps exercise or a verb conjugation test, or a translation. We want to see how well you can express yourself freely in the foreign language.

If you take a look at the Marking Criteria, you can see that when we assess your use of the foreign language we want to see a level of accuracy that we would expect to see in a student at your level of study – we're not expecting perfection, but the best preparation you can do is make sure your grammatical knowledge is as secure as it can be. For example, you will want to ensure you know how to agree gender and number, to form verb tenses, and order a sentence correctly in the language(s) you're studying. This will also help you for the oral element of your interviews.

The Marking Criteria for Use of the Foreign Language also allows us to reward range and complexity of the language used. In other words, this is your chance to show us how you can use different structures and show off the vocabulary you've learned. Use appropriate structures and language, of course, but don't write in short, safe sentences all the time – we'll be more impressed if you try a complicated sentence but get it slightly wrong, than with repetitive simple structures, even if they are grammatically correct.

Why assess comprehension and summary?

We're not only interested in your ability to use a foreign language, but we want to be sure that what you say is relevant too. Reading a complex text like the one used for the assessment is an activity you'll find yourself undertaking very often as an undergraduate, whether the text is in English or another language you are studying here. As a student, you'll be engaging with ideas and putting forward arguments.

Don't worry if you're not used to writing summaries. Here are a few basic tips:

1. read the text carefully and make sure you understand it

2. jot down what the main points are
3. re-write those points in your own words. Remember: this is not an exercise in translation, so you don't need to know the exact words for an idea, but instead think how you might explain it
4. remember also to tell us that you are writing about a text. Use the foreign language equivalents of phrases such as *The author suggests...* or *The text states....* Notice that you're mostly going to be using the present tense
5. don't include your opinion in a summary, but save that for the second part of Section A where you are asked to express whether you agree or disagree with the points made

What is Section B all about?

In this section you write your answer in English. While an undergraduate degree in languages does involve extending your writing skills in foreign languages, you'll also find yourself writing in English about many things such as books, films, history and philosophy, drawing on ideas you'll read about and hear about in lectures. So here you can show us your skills in recognising how language is used; although you are writing in English you'll also find that this is valuable practice for engaging with texts in other languages too.

It's important to remember that we don't expect you to know any special literary terms for describing writing styles or rhetorical devices – if you know some and can use them correctly, that's fine, but if not don't worry; as you can see from the marking criteria we're far more interested in seeing whether you can spot how the author of the text writes to persuade the reader to agree with his or her ideas. Some tips:

1. read through the passage again and think about the main points you identified when answering Section A. How did you know they were main points? Where did they come in the paragraph/structure of the text? How did the author signal that they were important points?
2. look closely at how the text begins and how the author establishes the text's theme. If the text includes more than one paragraph, is there a shift in point of view with the new paragraph? How are the paragraphs linked? Does the author pose questions? Does he or she present an idea but then immediately present a counter-argument? Does the author use technical language? Does he or she use emotive language, revealing something of the author's personal view? These are just some questions to think about, but you will most likely think of others

Half the marks for Section B are not for what you say, but how you communicate your observations to us. So don't write down a list of observations in order of lines 1-30 of the text, but group together the most common observations you make and talk about them together. Plan your response so that you explain clearly what is most important in the text and why. Keep an eye on the time too to make sure you have time to complete this task – a very short or obviously unfinished answer won't score a high mark!

What other things can I do?

Most important of all is to feel calm and prepared. Make sure you know where your assessment will take place and what time you need to be there. Use one of the

sample assessments to practice answering the questions in one hour. As said before, revise key grammar points in your chosen language(s) of study. Take a look also at resources such as HE+ – www.myheplus.com/subjects/modern-languages – designed by the University of Cambridge especially for students at your level, to extend their knowledge beyond the classroom.

And remember, the written assessment is just one factor among many that will help us decide whether to offer you a place to study here!

MML ADMISSIONS ASSESSMENT

SPECIMEN PAPER

Please read the following passage carefully and then answer the questions following it.

Your response to Section A **MUST** be in ONE of the languages that you are applying to study here. If you are studying at A Level (A2) or equivalent both of the languages you wish to study here, you are free to write in either language. Please write approximately 250 words in your answer.

Your response to Section B **MUST** be in English. Please note that you will not be penalised if you don't know the correct terminology to describe the use of English in the passage.

The territory of the earth is a mosaic of nations: or is it simply a mosaic of states? What makes a state a nation? The problem for the state, unless it possesses a monarch endowed with divine authority, is the question of what legitimates its authority. As the French discovered in 1789, the idea of the nation fulfils this function in an ideal way. As a larger corporation, to which its citizens necessarily belong without choice, the nation becomes an empty space in which all forms of potential identification can be filled: race, religion, language, culture, history, the land: what makes you a part of your nation?

It always used to be assumed that in order to become a nation, the people of a nation should resemble each other as closely as possible. If they looked different, spoke a different language, followed a different religion, then this was considered a threat to what the political theorist Benedict Anderson has characterized as the 'imagined community' of the nation. Many people, languages, cultures, have been repressed for this reason. The United States, a nation of immigrants, makes an interesting test case in its attempt to make the many one. First of all, everyone in the US has something in common, that they or their ancestors came as immigrants – though awkwardly this does not apply to the first nations of native Americans who were displaced or exterminated in order to make room for the new arrivals. Secondly, unlike most countries, even the landmass of the US is not attached, but dispersed with other countries and oceans in between. The absence of traditional links to land, history, and culture explains why the US has to make an identity for itself out of its liberal state ideology (democracy, liberty, free enterprise capitalism), and why it has to create demonic enemies which are alleged to threaten its very existence (successively: witchcraft, Chinese immigrants, communism, Hispanics who won't speak the state's official language, Islam...). These enemies serve to make all its different people feel collectively threatened, and therefore to bond with each other.

All these common values are symbolized by the American flag, which flies everywhere across the country, planted in every conceivable place: front lawns, car windows, the sides of buildings, corporate websites. Its ideology is materialized through the common lifestyle that keeps the US coherent as a nation, the proliferation of monopoly capitalism.

SECTION A

What are the main points of the author's argument? Do you agree or disagree? Explain your answer.

Remember to answer this section in APPROXIMATELY 250 WORDS in a foreign language you hope to study at Cambridge.

You should spend approximately 40 minutes on this exercise.

[32 marks]

SECTION B

How does the writer persuade us of his point of view? Please give examples from the text to support your answer.

Remember to answer this section in English.

You should spend approximately 20 minutes on this exercise.

[16 marks]

Modern and Medieval Languages Admissions Assessment – Marking Scheme

CANDIDATE.....TOTAL SCORE (___/48)

Question 1. What are the main points of the author's argument? Do you agree or disagree? Explain your answer. (Total of 32 marks available)

Comprehension, summary and response (16 marks)

Subtotal out of 16: ____

	Comprehension	Summary	Organization of ideas	Response to passage
4	☐ Clear comprehension of all aspects of the passage	☐ Very effective summary of main points	☐ Well structured answer	☐ Intelligent and cogent response to passage
3	☐ Good comprehension of the passage	☐ Competent summary of main points	☐ Generally clear organization of ideas	☐ Convincing response to passage
2	☐ Gaps in comprehension of passage with some irrelevant material	☐ Summary misses some key ideas	☐ Some attempt to organize ideas	☐ Fair but unambitious response to passage
1	☐ Significant misunderstandings in comprehension of passage	☐ Limited summary showing a number of deficiencies	☐ Disorganized	☐ Limited response to passage

Use of foreign language (16 marks)

Subtotal out of 16: ____

	Communication of ideas	Range of vocabulary	Complexity of language use	Accuracy
4	☐ Effective communication of complex ideas	☐ Ambitious range of vocabulary used	☐ Wide range of structures, including complex constructions	☐ Highly accurate with only occasional errors
3	☐ Good communication of complex ideas	☐ Appropriate range of vocabulary used	☐ Good variety of structures with some attempt at complex constructions	☐ Good level of accuracy with some errors
2	☐ Some attempt to communicate complex ideas	☐ Limited range of vocabulary hampers communication at points	☐ Structures mainly simple, with little variety	☐ A number of errors but these generally do not impede communication
1	☐ Little attempt to communicate complex ideas	☐ Simple and very limited vocabulary	☐ Structures very simple and limited in scope	☐ Many basic errors and/or errors which significantly impede communication

Question 2. How does the writer persuade us of his point of view? Please give examples from the text to support your answer.

(Total of 16 marks available)

Subtotal out of 16: _____

	Analysis	Evidence	Expression	Organization
4	☐ Perceptive analysis of a range of techniques (even if specialized terms are not used)	☐ Highly effective and detailed examples indicated	☐ Expression is precise, fluent and very persuasive	☐ Answer is complete, with ideas organized very effectively
3	☐ Competent analysis of a range of techniques (even if specialized terms are not used)	☐ A number of effective examples indicated	☐ Expression is fairly precise and fluent	☐ Answer is reasonably full, with ideas structured coherently
2	☐ Some techniques identified	☐ Some relevant examples indicated	☐ Expression is reasonably clear but little or no evidence of more complex vocabulary or syntax	☐ Answer is a little sketchy; some evidence of an attempt to organize ideas
1	☐ Very basic response, demonstrating limited or no awareness of relevant techniques	☐ Few or no relevant examples indicated	☐ Very basic expression which sometimes hampers the communication of ideas	☐ Answer is overly brief and/or poorly organized