

Dear Classics Fresher,

I'm Lottie and I'm a current first year studying German and Latin, meaning that I split my time equally between the MML and Classics departments. I'm very excited to be your 2020 subject rep!

Congratulations on making your offer and welcome to Sidney! Everyone here is extremely friendly, and you will soon be calling it your home. Sidney is perfectly located in the centre of Cambridge, meaning that it is only a short walk or cycle to lectures, supervisions or social activities. Not to mention we are directly opposite Sainsbury's, which means we are never too far from anything we might need!



Classics at Sidney is a relatively small and close-knit cohort (there are three Classicists including myself in my year), so there is lots of support available whenever you need it, whether in the form of subject friends, supervisors or other staff. There are always your college parents too, who are in the year above you and one of whom normally studies your subject. Due to the strong Classics community, there are numerous social activities arranged throughout the year, including an annual dinner generously funded by alumni to allow the meeting of both current and former Sidney Classicists, and a range of societies to join.

Classics at Sidney is particularly special in terms of the in-house teaching and support, as we receive extra reading classes compared to other colleges for Latin and Greek target texts in addition to those provided by the Faculty – this enables us to develop our language skills in small supervision groups. The Sidney library is also incredibly well stocked with Classical books (Alan the librarian is a Classicist himself!) and there are a number of College grants available for travel related to study of the Classical world.

The Part 1A (first year) course is structured to give you a broad introduction throughout Michaelmas to many aspects of both the Ancient Greek and Roman worlds. This comprises language (unseen translations into English and prose composition into the ancient language), literature, and cultural modules (Linguistics, Art and Archaeology, History, and Philosophy). At the end of your first term you will be able to choose two of the four modules to continue with.

There are lectures on all aspects of the course which take place at the Sidgwick Site (less than a twenty-minute walk/ten-minute cycle from Sidney) and are worth attending as they give you basic information on the topics, particularly if you have not studied it before. Note taking (whether laptop or handwriting) is an entirely personal preference – everyone does it differently! Regular supervisions comprise unseen translation, prose composition and literature (for both languages).

You should have received an email from the Faculty of Classics with details of your set texts and any preparatory work they recommend should be done before arrival. Personally, I found it helpful to read through the literature for Michaelmas which saves lots of time when you are here, but do not worry if you find the language difficult or about doing it in too much detail; that is what supervisions are for! It may also be useful to revisit any grammar you found difficult from A Levels, or if you are starting from scratch to build up some basic knowledge to ease your transition to university. As always, please feel free to ask me any questions about this!

Covering the texts before arrival is especially useful for those with A-Level Greek, as you have approximately three classes a week in which to go over the set texts, so it saves lots of time when you

are here if you can prepare as much as possible. A basic level of grammar and vocab revision is also helpful, particularly if anyone has taken a year out.

In terms of organisation, a paper diary/planner is invaluable. Write anything and everything down to keep on top of the many dates and tasks constantly being thrown at you! An electronic calendar (say, on your phone) is useful for keeping your timetable constantly with you. You do not need to bring lots of stationery, just a folder divided into topics, a pencil case and a laptop should suffice. Cambridge has lots of shops, including a Ryman and WHSmith conveniently located opposite Sidney, so anything you do not bring can easily be purchased when you are here.

Less is expected of you at first, and you will be eased into the Cambridge workload. Generally, you will be asked to write one essay a week of around 2000 words on either literature or a cultural aspect; as Cambridge students, we are very lucky in terms of the wealth of resources we have access to so that we can complete these. You can borrow from any subject library on the Sidgwick Site (where the Humanities Faculties are) but most of the time, your resources will be available online or in the Classics Faculty, if not in the Sidney library. Don't panic about the length of the reading lists. Particularly at first, you will be directed towards the most important books. In addition, you will be asked for each language to prepare a translation, a prose composition, and a section of the set texts for the reading classes/supervisions. It is easy to create a schedule of work for these outside of contact hours and you will discuss this with your DoS in your initial meetings at the start of term.

In supervisions, you will go over your work and expand your knowledge either by discussing your essay topic or by doing a new unseen translation. These can take place at other colleges as well as at Sidney or the Faculty and tend to be with a maximum of three people to ensure that everyone has an equal part in the discussion. These are, above all, a learning experience: what is expected of you is progress, not perfection! Supervisions are designed to challenge your thinking but not to be scary, and after a while they become normal as you have them so regularly. When you leave a supervision, you should feel intellectually stretched but also somewhat enlightened and with a deeper understanding of the topic.

Academics aside, Sidney is a great college for a healthy work/life balance. There are options to get involved in all sorts of societies and extracurricular activities, no matter what you are interested in and regardless of your ability (or whether you have done it before!). My advice would be to try whatever looks interesting, and you could discover a new passion. Making friends is easy, no matter your personality and interests, as everybody is so friendly here and the Sidney community welcomes and embraces all. The Freshers' Reps have been working hard on a programme of events for you to make your arrival even easier... before you know it, you will be thoroughly involved in the crazy, wonderful, Cambridge bubble; my best advice would be to seize and enjoy every moment!

I am very much looking forward to meeting you at the start of Michaelmas and wish you all the best for the remainder of your summer – make sure to have a well-deserved break! If you have any questions about anything at all or want any help, whether academic or general, please feel free to reach out to me or any other Sidney Classics student. My email is [cfdc2@cam.ac.uk](mailto:cfdc2@cam.ac.uk) or you can message me on Facebook too (Lottie Cummings).

I can't wait to meet you all and hope that this will be the start of three amazing years for you!

See you soon,  
Lottie ☺