

MML Subject Rep Letter

Dear MML Fresher,



I'm Rosa, a 2nd year French and (previously ab initio) Russian year student at Sidney.

First of all, congratulations on making your offer to study at Sidney, which is such a welcoming tight knit community and an extremely beautiful place! You will get to know so many of the other Sidney students and hopefully, find this a very supportive and warm place to live and study.

MML is a medium-sized subject at Sidney, so the MML group is usually 6 or 7 students. Some of my closest friends are MMLers, which makes supervisions much more enjoyable and means that I am looking forward to our fourth year together after the year abroad. We are all friendly as a group, but you will only see some others rarely if you don't do either of the same languages! Your college parents will also be an important link to the MML community at Sidney and can give you very useful subject-specific information. Every year there is also the MML dinner, where you will be able to mingle with MMLers from all year groups and MML academics at Sidney.

Before arriving, it is very useful to read all of the literature texts that you will be studying in the first term, because once you arrive you won't have time before you start having lectures and essays about them. You'll find all the information on how best to prepare before you arrive on the MMLL faculty webpage for Offer Holders: <https://www.mml.cam.ac.uk/offer-holders>. If you are an ab initio student, be sure to do the grammar and vocabulary work set as summer preparation. For Russian, for example, we were expected to have completed 6 chapters of a textbook, *Colloquial Russian*, and we did not go over any of this content! That said, do it slowly and steadily over summer and remember to have a good break as well – learning a language is a long process and you won't understand everything right away! The only books I would buy are set texts for literature, unless specified by the course requirements (e.g. coursebooks for certain ab initio languages). Any grammar textbooks or secondary sources, you can easily get from a library and you won't need to write in them! Organisationally, you will have to see what works best for you, but I found it useful to have a wallet for work from each class, each term. Definitely bring a planner or use an online calendar, like Google calendar! You won't get a timetable so it is your responsibility to know where you need to be and when, and I couldn't get by without Google calendar.

MMLers do a very varied range of work. With language classes and oral supervisions we have a lot of contact hours for a humanities subject, especially if one of your languages is ab initio. This means you will get to know a lot of MMLers at different colleges, and there is a lot of community within your subject. For classes, you will have smaller homework tasks with regular deadlines that you can structure your work around. You will also have literature

essays (normally 1,500 -2,000) words. This might seem intimidating at first but writing so often means that your essay technique will improve a lot. The point isn't that the essay be perfect or exhaustive but that you produce something that acts as a starting point for an interesting discussion in supervision! It can take a while to get used to, but supervisions and essays aren't assessments and they aren't a time for your supervisor to judge you. They are your time to learn and ask questions / explore ideas one on one that perhaps you didn't understand while reading about the topic and listening to lectures. They happen so often that they will start feeling normal after a while! MML supervisions normally have 2 – 3 students in them, who will usually be from Sidney. They will either happen in Sidney or at the languages faculty building, which is a 15 minute walk away through the very beautiful grounds of King's college! Lectures are here too, and they are not recorded, so are definitely worth attending. [Note: due to the pandemic, lectures will be pre-recorded in 2020-21]

Cambridge can be a challenging atmosphere, but you will learn more than you ever believed possible and it is really exciting to discuss interesting ideas with top academics and really deepen your knowledge of languages! For me, doing ab initio Russian and being able to see my progress from scratch to being able to hold a decent conversation, but it has also been one of the most demanding things I have ever done. It is really important to set a work-life balance and remember that academics are only one (albeit an important) part of your university experience. Use your first term as a time to experiment with different ways of working and different places to work; I go to lots of different libraries and coffee-shops but some people prefer working in their rooms alone. Sidney is a very welcoming place where really deep and supportive friendships and communities are formed, and furthermore it has the best and one of the cheapest bars in Cambridge! At the university, there is pretty much every extracurricular that you could possibly imagine. There are so many college and university wide sports teams, some more competitive than others, and opportunities to write for student publications. There are also loads of more relaxed events like life drawing and stand up comedy.

Feel free to reach out to me or any other Sidney MML student if you have any questions or want any help! My email is rhp41@cam.ac.uk or feel free to message me on facebook : Rosa Phelps. I look forward to meeting you and I hope that this will be the start of 4 amazing years for you! Cambridge is so full of opportunities, academic and otherwise, that I am sure you will make your time at university a memorable and unique experience!