

Dear 1st year mathematicians,

Firstly, well done! If you're reading this then you've successfully navigated UCAS, interviews, exams and a host of other challenges. You've got a place at one of the most beautiful colleges in Cambridge with certainly one of the most supportive maths communities. Welcome to being a "mathmo" (slang in Cam for a maths student).

Sadly you do occasionally have to do some work... The course in the first year is around 2 hours of lectures a day and 2 supervisions a week on 'examples sheets' set by the lecturer. The example sheets take a lot of work so be prepared, but don't be put off if you can't finish them – if you answer all the questions correctly you are doing very well! – just try your best. You also have the semi-legendary "surgery" with Dr Barden each week, which is a chance to discuss with him any problems you are having with the course. Also, some of the best people to ask for help are the second- and third-year students who will have been through exactly the same as you (even with many of the same lecturers) so please don't hesitate to ask for our help. Remember everyone will be finding it hard, but hopefully you will even enjoy some of it!

The Pembroke mathematical staff are truly great, but equally they don't accept any nonsense! You might have already met Dr Datta, your Director of Studies (she looks after your academic progress). Dr Barden, Dr Shadrin and Dr Sorrentino will probably also supervise you. Do the best you can, work hard on example sheets but remember to enjoy the other aspects of uni as well (e.g. don't lock yourself in your room all day!)

There's the famous Pembroke Mathematicians Dinner in Lent term, which is normally a bit of fun. WARNING: Dr Datta is not joking when she says she expects you to have a performance ready! (a mistake we made!) There is also a garden party in May week featuring large quantities of food and drink and the attendance of alumni of the college.

Other useful info: the history of maths lectures are not part of the course, but delivered by one of the funniest professors in the university – definitely worth a try at least. Food and drink are compulsory for his lectures! The Archimedean are the undergraduate mathematics society, which you may be interested in joining. They will have a stall at the freshers fair, along with many other Cambridge societies you might like to join, where you can sign up to their mailing list. The maths building is called Centre of Mathematical Sciences or CMS for short, and is split into DAMPT (Department of Applied Mathematics and Theoretical Physics) and DPMMS (Department of Pure Mathematics and Mathematical Statistics). It's a bit of a hike but you don't have to go there very often in the first year. Try not to have any preconceptions about what type of mathematics you like the most; maths here is very different from school, and you may surprise yourself! Even in third year there is no need to choose to be a 'pure' or 'applied' mathematician, and having a degree in maths you will be spoiled for choice of what to do next.

All in all, work hard and play hard – make sure you enjoy fresher's week! We look forward to meeting you in October at the subject lunch which will be a picnic on the roof of the CMS (weather permitting). If you have any questions at all then don't hesitate to contact us.

Best of luck,

Peter Hatfield (pwh27@cam.ac.uk, on the left)
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