

Dear Philosopher,

Congratulations on your results! Pembroke is a lovely college, definitely a home-from-home, and Philosophy's a great subject, so I hope you're really looking forward to coming here in a few weeks time.

My name is Freya and I'm going into my second year of Philosophy at Pembroke. I'll be your subject rep, so your official point of contact for Philosophy for the year. So, if you ever have any questions about the subject matter of the course or about any aspects of studying it, you're more than welcome to come and ask me about it or email me. Hopefully you'll get on great with it. I found/find it quite hard, but its really interesting, and our DoS (Director of Studies) and our supervisors are all really helpful and patient.

We have one one-on-one supervision a week, for which our supervisor gives us a title and a reading list, and we prepare an essay. I found that most weeks, things only really became clear during the supervision, so don't worry if you feel like you're winging it a bit with the essay. Having said that, work hard and read, and consider, everything that you're meant to, because your supervisor will be much happier with you if you've worked hard yet not understood it than not tried.

I think I had about eight lectures a week, which is minimal compared to some other subjects, so its definitely doable. The lecture courses provide a skeleton of knowledge for each topic, to which your weekly reading and essays and supervisions are the meat. Its important to attend the lectures/get the handouts, because lecturers are the people who set the exam questions.

In first year, you also have a group class per week. This varies every other week from logic class to discussion group. Don't be intimidated by the other people in your discussion group, because you will have something good to contribute, and you might as well get into it since you have to go every fortnight. (By the way, I'll just mention here, supervisions and classes are compulsory – you will get fined the cost of the supervisor if you miss one. Lectures are optional but recommended.) Similarly in logic class, don't be afraid of giving a wrong answer, it really isn't a big deal, because everyone else is just like you, doing it all for the first time.

In first year, we have four compulsory modules – metaphysics/epistemology, logic, ethics and set texts. Metaphysics/epistemology and ethics are normally the most popular, because they're pretty interesting and varied. Set texts is probably the easiest of the four. Logic is not so popular, because it can be a bit tedious, but once you've got to grips with it it's a fairly straight-forward module.

I would say that, if you want to do any pre-term preparation, you might as well read the three set texts (which you'll find on the faculty website), because you will be learning about them all through the year, and the better acquainted with them you are the easier this will be.

Other than that, just enjoy the rest of your summer!

See you in October (I'll organise a subject lunch),
All the best,
Freya Rowland