



Hi guys, I'm India, your subject rep for Pembroke VetMed freshers. I am just about to start my 3rd year at Pembroke, and will be in and around college all year, so feel free to grab me with any questions, problems etc you might have.

First of all, a massive congratulations! You've made it onto one of the most competitive courses in the country, an amazing achievement. A second congratulations for making the excellent choice of Pembroke College, arguably the finest of all the Cambridge colleges and certainly the most fun. I hope you've had a nice relaxing summer and are ready to enter the world of the vet student!

I'm going to give you a quick guide to surviving vet school (jokes, it's really not that bad) and hopefully alleviate a few fears and preconceptions you might have. First of all, my big mistake as a terrified fresher was assuming that Cambridge would be super-intimidating and that everyone would be cleverer than me – this is NOT TRUE! Everyone goes through the same selection process and I'm sure that you are more than up to the job. You might come across the odd genius doing maths, but the vets are a very down to earth bunch. This leads me to my second pearl of wisdom, which is the preconception that Cambridge is all work and no play. If you make your way down to the infamous Cindies nightclub on a Tuesday or Wednesday night, the abundance of animal-related fancy dress, and partyers in green boiler suits should change your mind. The much-renowned termly Pembroke Bops (parties) provide a good proportion of in-college gossip, owing mainly to excessive consumption of their trademark 'boptails'.

So on to the bad news: the work. Vet med is definitely a jump from A-levels, and you do need to be quite organised and stay on top of things, but in my experience as long as you chip away at it a little bit every day, it's totally manageable and you won't have too much of a last minute panic before the exams. It seems like a lot at first, but I promise everyone gets through their exams fine in the end. Everyone has their own way of working and this may take a while to figure out. My personal strategy was to try to read through the lecture notes before or after the lectures, so that in theory, I had read everything twice by the time it came to revision.

Basically you have lectures from 9am every weekday (bad luck) but often the day will end at lunchtime. If I remember rightly you will have two, two-hour dissections every week, which are a lot of fun and people generally make great friends on their dissection tables. The big difference from school is that you have supervisions. These sound a bit intense but are actually quite fun and extremely useful; you will have three a week, one for each subject, and they last one hour, generally in the evening. It will just be the vets from Pembroke, and your supervisor will explain any topics that you might have found difficult in the week, and may set you an essay or some past paper questions. Some supervisors set less work than others, luck of the draw really! But it certainly will never be huge amounts and shouldn't intrude too much on your social life!

The course is quite science-based in the first year, but this unfortunately is all necessary knowledge before they can let you loose on the animals in 4th year. They do organise regular farm visits throughout the year so you can have fun handling all the major groups of domestic species. Your subjects are:

- Anatomy (VAP) – straightforward and really interesting.
- Biochemistry (MIMS) – traditionally a bit more difficult, lots of things like respiration equations and genetics.
- Physiology (HOM) – all about the major organ systems and how they work, lots of fun practicals.

The exams are a long way away and you will be well prepared for them by your supervisors, but basically there is a multiple choice paper, a practical paper and an essay paper for each subject. Don't worry about them though, they really are NOT that scary!

Anyway have a great rest of the summer, don't worry about pre-reading before term starts, people don't usually bother unless they are super keen (I certainly wasn't!). Best of luck at Pembroke, I'm sure you will have an incredible time, and will soon find yourself calling it 'home' – a bit embarrassing with the parents I found! Do get in touch (ifwr2@cam.ac.uk) if you have any questions, otherwise I will find you in fresher's week!