

Hello Freshers-to-be!

Congratulations on being accepted into Pembroke College, widely believed (among Pembroke students) to be the best Cambridge college. Seriously though a massive well done for doing so well, STEP is such an ordeal, I think I'd rather spend the rest of eternity multiplying  $10 \times 10$  matrices together than go through that again. The fact that you did well enough in it to end up here is something you should never stop being proud of.

I'm Harry, a soon-to-be third-year mathematician and your subject rep (or more formally the "King Mathmo"). Mathmo, if you've never encountered the phrase, is the way people refer to mathematicians in Cambridge, presumably because it has half the number of syllables, allowing for more efficient communication. Together with József (your "Princess Mathmo") I will be organising a few events this coming year, including the subject lunch in freshers week, a mathmo formal later on next term and the all-important mathmo dinner in Lent Term (after Christmas), a black-tie affair in the Old Library where the next king is elected and one of your supervisors may or may not do a headstand. These events, together with the fantastic summer garden party after exams, are the social highlights of the year so clear a space in your calendar!

But it's not all three-course dinners and fine wines I'm afraid, you will unfortunately have a bit of work to do outside of that. First year maths is called "Part IA" (second year is Part IB, third is Part II), and you'll all take 8 compulsory modules, 4 in the first ("Michaelmas") term and another 4 in the second ("Lent") term. The third ("Easter") term is dedicated to revision and a couple of second year courses. You'll have lectures from 10am-12pm from Monday to Saturday, and every six lectures or so your lecturer will set an "Example Sheet" – a sheet of questions on that section of the course. You then complete this sheet and hand it in to your supervisor to mark. After this you'll have "supervisions" in pairs, in which your supervisor will go over your example sheet with you and you have the opportunity to ask any questions you have about the topic.

You may be wondering what you should be doing to prepare before October: I expect you'll be sent some pre-arrival work from Dr Datta, our Director of Studies, and needless to say it's a good idea to have completed this before you arrive! I remember being a little confused by some of it, so if you're stuck then just email me. But apart from this you don't need to have done anything over summer.

If you're anything like how I was when I first arrived here you're probably finding the prospect of coming to university pretty daunting. It helps to remember that everyone else is in the same boat as you. Wherever you end up living in college you can expect to meet plenty of lovely, friendly people, Pembroke seems to attract them for whatever reason (maybe because Bill Oddie went here?). No need to worry about making friends, staircases and corridors tend to foster strong communities that often last right through to third year: I've stayed living with my first year neighbours every year.

And if that's not enough there's a smorgasbord of societies and sports teams that you can join that let you mingle with people with the same interests as you from all across the college/university. You can also try something completely new: there are plenty of opportunities for budding collage-artists, foreign film-enthusiasts and amateur rocket-

builders to name but three. A full list of registered university societies can be found at <http://www.societies.cam.ac.uk/> and college societies can be found at <http://pem-jp.co.uk/societies>. I would also recommend going to the optional History of Mathematics lectures at the CMS on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday afternoons run by Piers Bursill-Hall. They're pretty informative but also a good laugh, and unlike in your morning lectures, eating and drinking is not only allowed but is actively encouraged!

That's enough from me for now, I'm looking forward to meeting you all in September. I'll get in touch nearer the time about the subject lunch during freshers week. If you have any questions in the meantime, work-related or otherwise, don't hesitate to contact me or József, I've included our contact details at the bottom of this letter

See you soon!

Harry



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