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# **Languages for All Fast Track Courses Maths UG Students**

## **Learner Handbook**

**2020-2021**

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The Language Centre offers a special pathway to all Fast Track modern language courses if you are on either the **Mathematics, Mathematics & Statistics** or **Mathematics & Philosophy** degrees in Part A, Part B or Part C. **This pathway covers Michaelmas and Hilary term.**

If you are studying one of the above courses, you are entitled to receive full funding for a Fast Track course in a language and level of your choice. The funding for your Fast Track Course is covered as follows:

- **50%** will be refunded to you **upon enrolment** by the Mathematical Institute;
- **50%** will be reimbursed to you by your College (or the Mathematical Institute) **upon completion of the course and of the related assessments** at the end of Hilary term or early in Trinity term.

Please note that Fast Track language courses do not contribute towards your degree. The assessment requirement is to evidence your engagement in the course.

To register, qualifying students must complete the following by Wednesday week 1 MT, 12 noon:

1. Sign up on the Maths Institute website at:  
<http://www.maths.ox.ac.uk/members/students/undergraduate-courses/student-sign-ups/language-classes>
2. Follow the instructions on the Language Centre website to enrol on the Fast Track course of your choice and pay the associated course fee
3. Go to your College with the Fast Track College Partial Reimbursement form, (<https://lang.web.ox.ac.uk/course-fees>, at the bottom of the page) filled in with the details of your course to confirm whether your College will reimburse the other 50% of the fee upon completion of the course. If not, please return the form evidencing that your college will not reimburse you to the Mathematical Institute.

# Key Information

Our **Fast Track Programme** is designed for learners who are motivated to progress faster. The Fast Track courses cover two learning stages in one year, with 3 hours of tuition per week per term for two terms – and elective assessments that lead to a certificate of completion awarded by the Language Centre.

Every week during term time, lessons are made up combining video instruction, online quizzes, discussions, resources and activities as well as personal and generic feedback from your tutor, lead to a 1-hour live session in small groups of normally up to 6 students. This represents a guided learning programme equivalent to 2 hours asynchronous learning + 1-hour live interaction in the target language. Live sessions are scheduled at different times of the day including early evening and take place via MS Teams.

The schedule of a given class will remain the same throughout the year. In Michaelmas term teaching starts in week 2 and runs through to week 8 inclusive. In Hilary term classes run from weeks 1 to 8 inclusive.

This is a demanding course (a rewarding one too!) for those who are strongly motivated to learn, and it is important to ensure that you join the right Stage. We strongly recommend that, if you already have some prior knowledge of the language you wish to study, you book a language level evaluation interview with a tutor in week 0 or week 1. Also, do take our language level evaluation test for French, German, Italian or Japanese (Virtual language Centre on Canvas). If you have **no prior knowledge** of the language, you may directly enrol into **Fast Track Stage 1+2**.

Courses on the Fast Track programme are available in the most popular of the languages taught at the Language Centre from Stage 1+2 beginners to Stage 4+5 advanced (leading towards CEFR Level B2). Languages available for 2020-2021 will be **Arabic, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Mandarin, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish**.

## Key facts

- Maths students attend in **MT and HT**
- Live sessions per week = 1 hour in groups of normally up to 6 learners with tutor – focus on spoken interaction. Fast Track 1+2 courses may start with 2 sessions of 30mn instead – tutors will arrange with their groups. Live sessions take place on MS teams and are recorded for review and feedback purposes

- Total annual hours of tuition: 45
- Entry: first-come, first-served.
- Certificate:
  - A certificate of attendance if you have attended and engaged with at least 80% of the course may be produced upon request
  - A certificate of completion following an in-class test mid-way through the course and a mini research project and presentation at the end of the course is awarded at the corresponding level of the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages)

## Course Fees

The fee for 2020-21 is £430.00 per student and will be reimbursed in full for those who complete the course and take the assessments.

## Identifying which stage is right for you

The Fast Track Programme has 4 double stages which are calibrated on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

Our tutors establish which Stage combination is right for each learner **through an evaluation interview** at the beginning of Michaelmas (and Hilary term for Hilary term entrants). A level evaluation test is also available on the **Virtual Language Centre** on Canvas for French, German, Italian and Japanese. Please click on the link below and enrol on the platform:

<https://canvas.ox.ac.uk/enroll/RFE3A6>

## Languages and stages available

	Stage 1+2	Stage 2+3	Stage 3+4	Stage 4+5	Missing stages?
Arabic	√	√	X	√	Please see our General courses
French	√	√	√	√	Please see our General courses
German	√	√	√	√	Please see our General courses
Italian	√	X	√	√	Please see our General courses
Japanese	√	√	√	X	Please see our General courses

Mandarin	√	√	√	√	Please see our General courses
Portuguese	√	√	X	X	Please see our General courses
Russian	√	√	X	√	Please see our General courses
Spanish	√	√	√	√	Please see our General courses

All Fast Track courses focus on the development of communicative linguistic competence, cultural and cross-cultural competence and on the development of language learning strategies for lifelong learning. Variations in learning outcomes are to be expected between European and non-European languages. Calibration is ongoing and monitored on a yearly basis.

Our Fast Track courses exit levels are broadly equivalent to:

	Broadly equivalent to CEFR
Stage 1+2	A2
Stage 2+3	B1
Stage 3+4	B1+
Stage 4+5	B2

## How to enrol

To enrol on a Fast Track course, you will need to have your level assessed, unless you are a beginner. We strongly recommend that you make an appointment to speak to a tutor and that you take the Language level evaluation test for French, German, Italian or Japanese if you can access Canvas.

During the first weeks of teaching, tutors will be making sure that you have enrolled for the right Stage and will advise you on how to change Stage if needed.

To cancel your booking, please follow the instructions included in the email you receive after you have enrolled and then contact [admin@lang.ox.ac.uk](mailto:admin@lang.ox.ac.uk).

## Course materials

All Language Centre courses make extensive use of Canvas, the University VLE. All our courses are developed on a flexible blended learning model, which rests upon multimedia pathways designed by our tutors for you in Canvas.

In addition to this, we will ask you to purchase a textbook. You will find a link to our most up to date list of textbooks at the end of this handbook and from each language

page on our website. Whilst we endeavour to ensure that textbooks are as economical as possible, it is not always possible for all languages to choose textbooks that are more economical than at present.

We normally provide you with opportunities to purchase your textbook from Blackwell's with a 15% discount; this however will not apply this year to any order made online where Blackwell's still offer the best value for academic textbooks. We also host a second-hand textbook forum on the Virtual Language Centre in Canvas to help our community of learners sell and acquire textbooks. To check the availability of a given textbook or to sell it, please register on our Virtual Language Centre site on Canvas and then click on the link to "secondhand books". We try at all times to make sure that the textbooks are available to you easily and at a minimal cost, this includes liaising with specialised bookshops and publishers

## Certificates and Course assessments

Fast Track courses have two assessments leading towards a certificate of course completion. These are not compulsory but **are required for a college partial reimbursement**.

### **Progress Test – Hilary term week 7 – 50%**

Includes: Listening comprehension, Reading Comprehension, Use of language and Writing task – duration 1 hour – done on Canvas.

### **Research Project and presentation – Week 8 HT – 50%**

Includes: reading, research, spoken production, spoken interaction and listening skills. Learners record their presentation as a video, share it with their tutor and classmates via Canvas – the live session is then dedicated to questions and discussions related to the presentation depending on the stage combination.

Certificates will normally be emailed to students in week 8 of Trinity term.

## Engagement and Attendance

If you wish to make progress in the language you are studying, regular engagement with the tasks and activities and participation in our live sessions are both very important. We understand that it may not always be possible for our learners to attend their classes every week. If you know of a reason why you will be absent, please inform your tutor.

If you are absent from the live session, it is your responsibility to catch up on the work you have missed. All materials including a recording of the class are available on Canvas, as well as the tasks set by the tutors to prepare for the next one are all available one week in advance. Feedback and recap on the previous session is usually available prior to the next live conversation class. If you are struggling to catch up after having missed a session, you may post a question on Canvas to seek help from our community of learners, or you may raise this with your tutor by emailing them via Canvas.

Remember that in languages regular practice is important – if you miss a week, particularly on a less-advanced course, you may have missed a lot of important new structures and explanations. Not keeping up with the pace of the course may also be disruptive to the quality of the course. It is your responsibility to remain engaged and seek support if needed in a timely manner. If you are experiencing difficulties managing your engagement or coping with the demands of the course, do make sure to discuss those with your tutor. The Fast Track programme is demanding but it also has important moments for reflection and revision.

## Progression

We have designed all our courses to enable learners to progress as far as possible – the highest level we offer in a language is however conditional to sufficient levels of demand.

To progress from one stage to the next, you do not need to have completed or passed the optional assessments but we highly recommend that you make an appointment the following year with a tutor to receive adequate advice on the best next course available to you.

## Quality Assurance, Feedback and complaints

All our courses are subject to quality monitoring and annual review cycles. We collect feedback from our learners informally during the course and formally at the end of each term.

We review your feedback and where possible adjust our courses and systems in light of your experience at the Language Centre. Here are some examples of comments made by our learners in the past and examples of action we have taken subsequently to improve their learning experience or spread best practice:

“I enjoy the conversation between students. Meanwhile, the learning curve of the course is steep and I feel the challenges offers me more motivation to finish the course.”



“Feeling like I am making progress and understanding more and more of my target language. The teacher is very friendly, and the classmates are supportive.”

“I loved the online learning pathway as I knew beforehand what that week's lesson would be on. It allowed me to prepare and read in advance (I am a slow reader), and use the class time to engage in speaking practice and ask any question in a discussion forum”.

“The teacher was amazing! Engaging, fun and precise always accommodating requests but never losing the goal and pace. I am really grateful!”

“I probably spend more time completing the online exercises than I did before just going to the classes and doing my homework. Having said that, I think my learning has improved as the 1:1 feedback is very useful and the speaking in small groups is very beneficial”

“I really liked the pre-recorded lectures in Trinity term, being able to re-watch sections on grammar points is very useful. I wouldn't mind if future courses remained in-part online”

Many learners indicated in their feedback that the 30minutes allocated to the live session were not enough – so from next year we are doubling that time to 1 hour for the Fast Track courses. Tutors will arrange two 30mn sessions if possible with the 1+2 groups as an hour might be a bit long in the first term when one is only beginning to learn a new language! If you are dissatisfied with any aspect of your learning, your first port of call should be to raise the matter directly with your tutor. Where you feel that this is not possible, you should follow our complaints policy at:

<https://www.lang.ox.ac.uk/complaints-policy>