

Congratulations on your offer to read Czech at New College. I very much hope that you will fulfil your offer and join us in October. You'll be receiving a lot of introductory material from the college, but the purpose of this letter is to give you some help in preparing for your first term and first year studying Czech. Very few students come to Oxford with any prior knowledge of Czech, so this letter will help you get started.

Perhaps the single most useful thing you can do before coming is to read the Czech Prelim Handbook for 2018-19. It's always available on the Modern Language Faculty's Czech website (<http://www.mod-langs.ox.ac.uk/czech>), but you'll also find a copy accompanying this letter. The Handbook contains detailed information about the structure of the course, the books we will read during your Prelim year, and other reference material that you will find helpful for your planning and preparation during the long vacation.

You should start your preparatory work as soon as possible. Czech makes considerable demands on beginners: it is a highly inflected language, and one in which most of the vocabulary will be completely unfamiliar from the English point of view. Alongside your language classes during term-time you will need to work independently to reach the required levels of competence in the language, and the long vacation is the ideal time to start this. You should buy a copy of the textbook we use as soon as possible: **James Naughton, *Colloquial Czech* (Routledge, 2011)**. Please make sure that you get the most recent (third) edition. Once you have it you can make an immediate start on reading the early chapters, paying particular attention to pronunciation and vocabulary. The best English language reference grammar of Czech is **James Naughton, *Czech: An Essential Grammar* (Routledge, 2005)** and again I strongly advise you to purchase a copy before you come to Oxford. Finally, the Czech Prelim Handbook contains descriptions of a number of readily (and not so readily) available dictionaries. You must obtain a good quality dictionary before coming to Oxford as you will need to use it from the outset.

In the first year of your Czech degree you will read four short stories and three other major works of Czech literature. As beginners in the language you clearly won't be able to read these works in Czech immediately, however you *will* be reading them in parallel

Czech and English texts and this is considered to be a key part of your language learning. I will provide you with the Czech language texts, however you should obtain and read the standard English translations over the summer. In Michaelmas term, we will concentrate on Milan Kundera's story 'Falešný autostop' (translated as 'The Hitchhiking Game' in Kundera's collection *Laughable Loves*), then move on to Jan Neruda, 'Doktor Kazisvět' ('Doctor Spoiler' in *Prague Tales*). After that we will read Ota Pavel's 'Zlatí úhoři' ('The Golden Eels' – a translation of this story will be provided) and finally 'Pábitelé' by Bohumil Hrabal ('Palaverers' in *The Death of Mr Baltisberger*). I will give you additional guidance at the beginning of Michaelmas term as to suitable translations of the other works you will be reading later in your first year. As far as other reading on Czech literature is concerned, you will find **Robert Porter, *An Introduction to Twentieth-Century Czech Fiction: Comedies of Defiance* (Sussex Academic Press, 2001)** very useful and I recommend you buy your own copy. Full details of all these books are given in the Handbook and on our webpage at <http://www.mod-langs.ox.ac.uk/czech>. The 'Oxford Czech and Slovak Resources' website at <http://czech.mml.ox.ac.uk> contains a great deal more information to help you while you are studying Czech at Oxford.

Naturally, you should enjoy your time this summer so that you arrive in Oxford in October rested and relaxed, but don't forget that preparation for your first term at Oxford is also very important and will help the transition into student life here go more smoothly. Please feel free to contact me if you need any additional help or advice, and don't leave your preparations until the last minute, especially not when it comes to ordering and obtaining your first year books for Czech as these are not always immediately available.

I'm looking forward to meeting you in 0th week of Michaelmas term, and I hope you have a very enjoyable summer.

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