

August 2024

Congratulations on your offer to read Czech at St Edmund Hall. 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.

The single most useful thing you can do before coming is to read the Czech Prelim Handbook for 2024-25. You'll find a copy accompanying this letter, and once you have an Oxford log-in, you'll be able to access it from the Faculty's Canvas page. The Handbook contains detailed information about the structure of the course, the books we will read during your Prelim year, and other advice to help you with planning and preparation for your studies here.

There is no set work to complete for Czech in advance of coming to Oxford. However, we strongly encourage you to obtain 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. In language classes, we do not assume that you have studied any Czech before, but familiarizing yourself with the early chapters, specifically Czech letters and pronunciation, initial vocabulary and grammar, will ensure you approach your first classes with more confidence.

As crazy as it may seem, you will also begin reading Czech literature in Czech from the first week. You will find that this greatly accelerates your language-learning as well as your appreciation of the Czech language. The first text we will study is the first great work of modern Czech literature, the Romantic epic poem *Máj* by Karel Hynek Mácha, published in 1836. You will find the text with a parallel translation here: <https://czech.mml.ox.ac.uk/karel-hynek-macha-maj-1836> Again you are not expected to have read through the poem before we meet, but you may find it helpful to form an idea of the text in advance. Otherwise, we encourage you to immerse yourself in the world of the Czechs in whatever ways you prefer; you will find plenty of additional suggestions for advance reading and viewing in the handbook.

Vanda Pickett and I look forward very much to our first meeting during 0th week of the coming Michaelmas Term. Meantime please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns, however trivial they may seem, at: rajendra.chitnis@mod-langs.ox.ac.uk

Yours sincerely

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