

Hi! My name is Phoebe Jowett Smith and I am currently studying Spanish and Arabic at Jesus. I took the OLAT and MLAT in October 2017 and I am currently in my first year at Oxford. I only took the Spanish MLAT so do make sure you look at the past papers for your own target language and don't just rely on my experience!

The MLAT: This is a very self-explanatory test. If you make sure that your grammar is well practised and accurate in your target language, then this test should not be too challenging.

Timing: Ideally you should try to finish the whole paper as the MLAT is really testing grammar which should be quite familiar to you already. However, accuracy is the most important thing to focus on.

Preparing: Focus on the parts of grammar which you are weakest on (subjunctives, imperatives and pronouns are frequently tested). The MLAT will aim to test the most challenging pieces of grammar in your language so don't bury your head in the sand and avoid the subjunctive because its tricky! You can find lots of past papers (<https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/portal/site/:humdiv:modlang:mlat-tests>) to practise, if they don't have mark schemes then you can usually ask your teachers to go over them with you. If you don't have this resource then use respected grammar books to mark it yourself. For Spanish, the best book to use is *A new reference grammar of modern Spanish* by Butt. Also, do not waste time on learning lots of vocab; you should have a good working vocabulary anyway but there will always be words in the test which you just cannot remember! The test is checking that you have a broad range of vocab but its not the end of the world if you can't remember one word. The test also tends to throw a couple of idioms at you, again it is impossible to know all the Spanish idioms unless you are fluent so just try and brush up on the most common ones.

The test itself: Most of you will be taking the MLAT in conjunction with another test, unless you are applying for Sole. Just treat it like a normal exam, ie. drink plenty of water, try and get a good night's sleep etc.

After the test: Do not worry and stress about the interview acceptance just try to focus on school or gap year or whatever you are doing! The revision for the test is extremely helpful for A Level exams as usually you push yourself outside of the curriculum in order to cover all the necessary grammar. This means that no matter the outcome of your application, your language benefits!

The application experience: the whole experience of applying to Oxford is very stressful; but if you can make it through that then you can make it through the course! There are so many tests, written work and interviews that by the end of the whole process you will feel exhausted. I found it helpful to remember that Oxford is investing so much time in you that even if you end up not being offered a place, it still means that they have really considered your application thoroughly and it isn't just a glance at your personal statement and grades.

Good luck to all the linguists out there! Remember though that doing a language at Oxford entails a course almost completely based upon literature. Make sure this is the right course for you because if you don't enjoy reading then you might find it a bit challenging!