

## What sort of a language is Modern Greek?

Modern Greek is spoken by about 11 million people in Greece and Cyprus, and in various Greek communities scattered throughout the world. It is an Indo-European language, but unlike French or German it has no close relatives among modern European languages. It is descended from Ancient, or Classical, Greek and still uses the same 24 letters of the alphabet, although considerable changes have taken place in pronunciation, as well as in grammar, syntax and vocabulary. Beginners will find that a good many Modern Greek words and roots are already familiar to them from our scientific and technical vocabulary. A knowledge of Ancient Greek **can** help the student of the modern language, but it is by no means a prerequisite. Modern Greek can be approached directly as a modern language in its own right – which is precisely how the majority of our students learn it. At Cambridge we teach the modern standard form of the language (sometimes referred to as ‘demotic’), rather than the learned *katharevousa* which used to be used for formal and some literary purposes.

## Why study it at Cambridge?

These days, a knowledge of one of the less widely known languages, such as Greek, is viewed by employers as a distinct advantage. It also opens the door to the intellectual study of the culture and history of the people who speak the language. Modern Greek literature is exceptionally rich, particularly in poetry (with two Nobel laureates in recent decades). The historical and broader cultural background is

unique and fascinating: the Byzantine Empire, four centuries of Turkish rule, and a complex political history since independence was proclaimed in 1821.

## What is the course like?

Modern Languages at Cambridge is normally a four-year course, with the third year spent abroad. All students are required to study **two** languages in their first and second years. Modern Greek can be combined with all the other modern European languages available at Cambridge, or with a classical language (Latin or Ancient Greek).

For those who have A level in Modern Greek, or have reached a similar standard, the first-year examination – Part IA – consists of two language papers, an oral, and a paper on ‘Greek literature, thought, and history since 1880’. Beginners follow a specially structured course leading to their Part IA, in which they take three introductory papers covering language, prescribed literary texts, and history topics, and an oral. The beginners’ course aims to equip students with a solid working knowledge of the language. Oral, writing and translation skills are all taught, using modern methods. The teaching of Modern Greek literature and history is also begun early, and by the end of their first term beginners will have read several poems in the original Greek and written essays on them. At the end of their first year most students attend a summer school in Greece, for which some scholarships are available. In the second year (Part IB), post-A level

students take one compulsory Greek language paper (translation into Greek and listening comprehension), and a similar paper in their other language, but otherwise have freedom of choice amongst a wide range of options. Beginners take the paper on ‘Greek literature, thought, and history since 1880’, and at least one Greek language paper and an oral. A paper called ‘Introduction to the Cretan Renaissance’ is available to both beginners and non-beginners in Part IB. The third year can be spent studying at a Greek university or in some approved employment in Greece. In Part II (the final examination) a full range of Modern Greek options is available (5 papers), in addition to the two Greek language papers (translation from and into Greek, and essay). The Modern Greek option papers range from ‘The beginnings of Modern Greek literature, 1100-1453’ to ‘Greek literature, history, and thought, since

1900', and there is also a paper on the 'The history and structure of Modern Greek'. (Some of the option papers are also available in Part IB.) Any of these can be combined with papers in other languages and literatures, linguistics, art history, film, critical theory, etc. The Modern Greek teaching staff currently consists of a lecturer, a research fellows (who is a specialist in modern Greek history) and three language assistants.

### **What facilities are available?**

The Modern Greek section of the Classics Faculty Library (adjacent to the Modern Languages Faculty) contains about 3,000 books for student use. In addition, the University Library has a much larger Modern Greek collection. The Language Centre has an extensive Modern Greek section, with courses on audio- and video-tape, recorded television programmes, and specially prepared exercises. Greek television is received by satellite. Each year there is a series of lectures by distinguished visiting speakers on a wide range of subjects connected with Modern Greece, its history and culture. And once a year (usually at the end of the second term) there is a residential weekend course for all students of Modern Greek at British universities. It was held in Cambridge in 1997. There are Cambridge University Hellenic and Cyprus societies, which welcome students of Modern Greek to their meetings and social events. There are ample opportunities for practising your Greek with native-speakers in Cambridge. And there are several Greek restaurants too!

### **Where can Modern Greek lead?**

The possibilities are endless. Linguists can do any of the jobs that are open to arts graduates, and they have their linguistic skills to offer as an added bonus. Even if they are not required to use their languages at once, the opportunity can often come later. Graduates of recent years who studied Modern Greek for all or part of their time in Cambridge are known to be pursuing careers in law, banking, accountancy, finance, industrial management, public relations, the diplomatic service, the income tax inspectorate, teaching, translating and interpreting, overseas development, journalism and broadcasting – and this far from being a complete list.

### **How do you get in?**

You should have (or expect to get) an A grade at A level in one or more languages. You would normally be allowed to choose only one new language for the Cambridge Tripos. Other particularly relevant A level subjects are English and History, but many different combinations are possible. All candidates must apply, through their school, to one of the undergraduate colleges. Typical conditional offers are AAA or AAB at A level (or comparable grades in other qualifications, such as Scottish Highers or the International or European Baccalaureate).

If you have any questions about the Modern Greek course, write to the lecturer in charge:

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# **MODERN GREEK AT CAMBRIDGE**