

Advice for the Natural Sciences Admission Assessment

The NSAA is the pre interview assessment required for Veterinary Medicine and Natural Science applicants at Cambridge. It consists of two sections.

Section 1: 80 minutes

- Multiple choice questions
- Each part consists of 18 questions
- Required to complete Part A (Maths)
- Choose 2 further parts to complete (Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Advanced Maths and Advanced Physics)
- No calculators allowed

Section 2: 40 minutes

- Open response questions
- Choose 2 questions to answer from the 6 available (2 for Biology, 2 for Chemistry, 2 for physics)
- Calculators allowed

Preparation

Remember that this test is very different from any you have sat before. It is important to remember that it is aimed at those working towards A's and A*'s in order to differentiate between the large number of applicants they receive. The test includes a wide range of topics and has restricted time limits, meaning that high marks are difficult to achieve. In your preparation focus on developing the skills needed to approach questions you know little about. It is inefficient to try and memorise as much as possible, as this technique is unlikely to be helpful given the style of questioning in this test.

1. Read the specification which can be found on Cambridge Natural Science page under entry requirements.

- Look for topics learnt at GCSE that are not taught at A Level (for example electrolysis)
- Look for topics that are yet to be covered in class at A Level
Do not revise specific topics at length! It is more likely than not that it will not come up as there are only 18 questions per subject.

2. Practise the skills using a number of resources similar to the questions in the test

- BMAT section 2 questions are very similar to NSAA section 1
- The Cambridge Chemistry Challenge questions are very similar to the open response questions in NSAA section 2
- Olympiad questions
- Maths challenge past papers

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With multiple choice questions eliminate what is definitely incorrect in order to make the question more manageable. You need to learn when to move on and how to make educated guesses.

The open response questions for Physics and Chemistry are more direct and it is clear what they are looking for in the question. In comparison, the Biology questions are less specific and don't necessarily have one correct answer (in particular, the final essay). Although you may want to write as much as you can, planning your answers may be useful to ensure you do not write excess information and waste time. If you plan to choose a Biology question, do practice writing long response questions in preparation.

3. **Work under timed conditions** with the Specimen and past papers

- The specimen, 2016 and 2017 papers are all online and worked answers can be found on this website
- As there are only 3 full papers it is advisable to sit these timed.
Doing these in exam conditions allows you to work out how much time you need to spend on each part/question, and which order to do the parts. Do not spend longer than time you have allocated to each part- you should move on and come back if there is any remaining time. As no marks are deducted for incorrect answers, do not leave any questions unanswered.

Sitting the test

Going into the test you should know how long you are going to spend on each question (a watch would be useful), the parts you will be completing and the questions you are likely to choose in section 2.

1. **Section 1**

One of the most important things in this section is to not spend too much time on each question- highlight questions you cannot complete and make it a priority to come back to them later. Despite this, ensure you read every question properly as it is common for there to be a trick in the question. Your answer being one of the options does not necessarily mean that it is correct. Check your answers as you go as it is unlikely that you will have time at the end.

2. **Section 2**

Flick through all the potential questions you may do to see if there is a topic/question you definitely could not answer. Although you may have an idea of which subject questions you may complete, don't be hesitant to change on the day if you think you may be able to gain more marks on another. However, one of the most important things is to not spend excessive length of time choosing which to complete. On the Biology questions, although the question may seem



ambiguous, aim to answer clearly and display your knowledge as much as you can. Always check through the essays for spelling and clarity.

