

## University Entrance Tests Factsheet 2026

Many EMS students will need to take University Admissions Tests, in addition to their A level exams. This document is intended to give students and parents some information about what they are, how to prepare and the timeframes for these assessments. There have been a number of changes made to how these run recently, so we wish to make sure students and parents are aware of these; be aware that some information online may not have been updated since these changes.

### What are University Admissions Tests?

For some competitive University courses, in addition to A level requirements, students will be required to sit additional tests; these may be taken into account when deciding whether to give an offer, or they may be later in the year and form part of the requirements of an offer for a place. These tests will often be testing skills such as critical thinking and problem solving, rather than any additional content.

For students applying to very competitive universities, these tests are likely to be the most significant challenge to them gaining a place, rather than their A level results.

Some universities may give reduced A level offers for students taking these tests if they achieve certain grades. We have endeavoured to update requirements, dates etc. below, but students should investigate the current requirements for any courses they are considering applying for.

**Changes** to entrance tests for this year:

- Oxford and other universities will no longer be using the MAT for mathematics entrants, instead using TMUA.
- Cambridge will be using the TMUA with their candidates, in addition to STEP.

Changes that have taken place over the past few years are:

- TMUA is now a computer-based test at Pearson test centres, not schools/colleges, with two sittings rather than one being available. Students applying to Early-entrance Universities must take the first sitting.
- Students are now responsible for entering themselves for most of these entrance tests via Pearson VUE/ UATUK.

## What are the most common tests our students will be taking?

Details here are intended to be a 'typical' rough guide; students should check the admissions requirements for the course they are applying for (some of these have not been confirmed for next year at time of writing). **Please check most recent information as to what is required for any courses you are applying for;** Competitive universities, Russell Group etc often require these tests, but may change from year to year.

Test	Format	Typical courses requiring this test	Registration	When	Cost
STEP (Sixth Term Examination Paper)	Two 3 hour papers; Step 2 and Step 3 (Step 1 has been discontinued)	Cambridge Maths, other universities.	March (tbc)	June, alongside A level examinations	£93 per paper tbc
TMUA (Test for Mathematics for University Admission)	Two 75 minute papers, taken together multiple choice	Cambridge Maths (in addition to STEP), Computer Science, Economics. LSE, Warwick, IC	Register on site from 1 <sup>st</sup> June 2026  Booking opens: 20 <sup>th</sup> July Ends: 28 <sup>th</sup> September	12th-16th October	£78
ESAT (Engineering and Science Admissions Test) <i>Replaces NSAA and ENGAA</i>	Computer based two 40 minute back to back assessments.	Cambridge Engineering, Natural Science	Register on site from 1 <sup>st</sup> June 2026  Booking opens: 20 <sup>th</sup> July Ends: 28 <sup>th</sup> September	12th-16th October	£78
TARA	Three 40 minute modules.	UCL	Register on site from 1 <sup>st</sup> June 2026  Booking opens: 20 <sup>th</sup> July Ends: 28 <sup>th</sup> September	12th-16th October	£78

## **When do students need to register and what are access arrangements?**

For most tests (excluding STEP), **students will need to register themselves online**. Please see the **registration dates** in the table above; note that some of these, in particular TMUA, are very early in the academic year. Students should have the same **exam access arrangements** that they would have in a public exam. Students have been asked for any exam requirements so that Yasmin Trevelyan (Assistant Head - SEND) can prepare the evidence that they will need to upload. Students should now have been contacted by Grace Strachan (Deputy SEND) with the outcome of this. Please note that for most tests there is a 'registration date' where students make accounts and upload exam access material as well as a 'booking date' where they book an actual test slot. As these dates are during the summer holidays it is essential that students raise any exam access requirement concerns with Grace asap before leaving for summer. Please also note that on some tests the booking/registration windows end earlier for students with access requirements, so please do check these.

Our advice would be to book tests at the earliest available opportunity, as our experience from last year is that slots in local centres do book up. However, if you do find an appropriate venue that is not available online, then try to book over the phone, as students have often had success in securing local venues that weren't available online.

**Candidates for TMUA and ESAT** should register at [Register – UAT UK \(esat-tmua.ac.uk\)](https://esat-tmua.ac.uk); we recommend setting up their Pearson VUE account on this site **as soon as possible**. Students will need to book and pay for the test themselves at a Pearson test centre via the account: Note that UAT-UK says: The earlier you book, the more chance you have of getting the appointment you want at your local test centre.

Please also be aware that previous experience has shown that sometimes more times are available through phone booking than have appeared on the website.

Do also ensure on test day that ID requirements etc. are followed.

Note: there is a bursary scheme to waive the registration cost: [Bursary Scheme – UAT UK \(esat-tmua.ac.uk\)](https://esat-tmua.ac.uk)

## **Candidates for STEP**

STEP will be booked via the School. Test dates have not been announced but registration is likely to open in March.

### **When should students start preparing?**

**TMUA:** It is worth noting that the MAT will be before the autumn half term, so waiting until September to start preparing will not allow much time. We recommend students begin preparing **before and over summer**, allowing time each week to focus on TMUA or MAT part A questions which are similar and more numerous.

We have been looking at TMUA and MAT questions in the optional problem solving class, and there is an optional end of year assesment covering these questions.

**STEP:** As STEP is taken at the end of the year, there is a much longer preperation period, nevertheless it can quite easily take an hour to complete a STEP question and so we recommend students, who are committed to applying, should begin scheduling in some time each week to look at STEP Qs consistently through Year 13. As STEP relies on the full range of A level content STEP 3 questions may not be accessible until later in the year, but STEP 1 should already be accessible. (Note; STEP 1 is no longer available as an assesment, but previous papers are still available, our students will sit STEP 2 and STEP 3.) This year Cambridge applicants will also need to take TMUA, so initially time may need to be allocated to this.

### **How should they prepare outside of school?**

For all these assessments, it is important to have a **schedule** as to when practice is going to take place. It is also important to **allow time for genuine reflection** on questions, rather than simply looking at the provided answer. Students should ask questions like:

What generalised methods can I take away from this question? How would I have known to do that? Was there a more efficient method? How could I have spotted it? Did I persist enough? Or too much? Was I aware of mistakes or wrong turns as early as I could have been?

It is good to make **notes** on these reflections after each question and review these.

A selection of STEP resources are also attached at the end of this letter.

### **What support will they get in school?**

Support will be provided through the optional Maths, Physics and Computer Science problem solving sessions, where we will look at MAT, STEP and TMUA questions, and draw out generalised learning points for each of these, as well as looking at control and exam technique. We will, for the first time, be running a pre-summer assesment. In addition we will, as in previous years run a full practice assesment of the relavent type in advance of the appropriate dates.

Students at EMS are already in a good position, as many of questions from these assessments, or questions of similar style will be present in their normal lessons, and in 'section C' in homeworks.

I hope this information is of use to you, do please let me know if you have any questions.

Thank you

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### **STEP resources:**

**Stephen Siklos's preparation books:** Historically these were the standard way to prepare, and they are still a good resource, with discussion before and after each question.

[advpcm.pdf \(cuhs.co.uk\)](#)

[Advanced Problems in Mathematics: Preparing for University | Open Book Publishers](#)

**Step foundation modules:** we have now finished using these in class, and so any that have not yet been used are a good resource to do in your early preparation

[STEP Support Foundation modules | STEP Support Programme \(maths.org\)](#)

### **Step 2 and step 3 modules**

Problem solving sessions up to Christmas will be based around the STEP 2 modules, so avoid these until then. Similarly sessions from Jan-Easter will be using the STEP 3 modules.

[STEP 2 modules | STEP Support Programme \(maths.org\)](#)

[STEP 3 modules | STEP Support Programme \(maths.org\)](#)

### **Past papers**

Note that the style in very old papers (e.g. 90s or earlier) may be different, and also try to avoid using even year papers as we will try to focus on these in school where possible.

[Sixth Term Examination Paper \(STEP\) - PMT \(physicsandmathstutor.com\)](#)

### **TMUA resources**

[Prepare – UAT UK \(esat-tmua.ac.uk\)](#) (please follow the even in EMS odd at 'ome rule if possible)

The first half of the MAT paper is similar to TMUA:

[Maths Admissions Test | Mathematical Institute](#)

### **ESAT resources**

[ESAT Preparation Materials – UAT UK \(esat-tmua.ac.uk\)](#)