

Course Information Sheet for entry in 2023-24: MPhil in Evidence-Based Social Intervention and Policy Evaluation



About the course

The MPhil in Evidence-Based Social Intervention and Policy Evaluation (EBSIPE) emphasises research methods for evaluating interventions and policies, as well as the advanced study of evidence-based practice and policy.

The MPhil is designed for students with a specific interest in understanding the effectiveness of policies, such as regulations concerning alcohol abuse or gun control, public health or poverty policies, and social interventions, such as cash transfers, parenting education, or violence prevention programs. It prepares students for a career in, for example, development, public policy, or policy and programme evaluation. Applicants with a professional background, such as those in evaluation, public health or policy consulting, will enhance their research skills and develop a major piece of research in a world-class environment.

This course aims to develop your critical analysis, problem solving and research skills in the field of evidence-based interventions and policies for social problems, which will allow you to be both a critical consumer of research and to carry out evaluations and other research designs. Your studies will consider evidence-based practice and policy in relation to, for example, children and families, poverty and inequality, mental health, refugees, drug use, violence and injury prevention, and offending.

Course structure

The MPhil has six major components:

- core course on evaluation methods
- pathway course, either Social Intervention or Policy Evaluation
- two specialist options, eg on Child and Family Interventions, Social Policies and Health Inequalities, Community Analysis and Large-Scale Interventions. In the second year it may be possible to select an option from Comparative Social Policy
- research methods training (Quantitative and Qualitative Methods, R-Programming, Systematic Reviews)
- MPhil thesis

During the first and second terms, the majority of learning is classroom-based, complemented by independent reading, tutorials, and formative and summative assessments. The third term involves largely self-directed study for remaining summative assessments, exam/assessment revision, and further development of the MPhil thesis proposal. Additional lectures and question/answer are typically offered on an optional basis to support students in preparing for exams and/or assessments and using various methodologies for thesis projects. In subsequent terms, MPhil students follow a largely self-directed schedule based on remaining training needs/interests identified with their supervisor, enrol in a second specialist option course, and are encouraged to fully participate in regular seminars, colloquia, and research group meetings offered by the department.

MPhil thesis

You will write a research thesis to acquire expert knowledge in your area of interest, to apply the research methods, and contribute to new scientific knowledge.

Core course in evaluation methods

This course, taken over two terms, trains students to critically consume and produce evaluation research for policies and social interventions, focusing on multiple methods, including randomised controlled trials and quasi-randomised methods, qualitative evaluation, and systematic reviews. The course has a strong focus on 'open science' and research transparency.

Pathway course

You will select one of two available pathways, to be taken over two terms:

- Social Intervention, covering evidence-based methods to evaluate social interventions, theories underlying interventions, ethical issues, and applying research in practice and policy, including the challenges of implementing programmes in the real world; or
- Policy Evaluation, introducing you to social policy analysis, policy formation, and the relationship between evidence and policy, and to different research methods for evaluating policies, eg quasi-experimental designs, natural experiments.

You may be able to change your choice of pathway in the first week of the programme.

Specialist options

You will take two one-term specialist courses from a list of options which may include Children and Families, Social Policies and Health Inequalities, Community Analysis and Large-Scale Interventions.

MPhil students may attend advanced methods classes, such as Intermediate Statistics, in their second year.

Research methods training

Students following the social intervention or policy evaluation pathway take a core evaluation methods course. In addition, all student in the MPhil EBSIPE take the following methods courses:

- systematic reviews, quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods, ie to learn to synthesise the best available evidence (two terms)
- quantitative methods, ie key statistical concepts and application in the leading software, R (one term)
- qualitative research methods, ie design, data collection, analysis and qualitative meta-synthesis.
- field methods, ie managing, costing and running real-world evaluations.

Specialist interdisciplinary training in systematic reviews has led to published masters' theses, for example:

- 2020: 'Evaluating the impact of penalising the use of mobile phones while driving on road traffic fatalities, serious injuries and mobile phone use: a systematic review'
- 2018: 'A cumulative meta-analysis of the effects of individual physical activity interventions targeting healthy adults'
- 2017: 'Parenting Programs for the Prevention of Child Physical Abuse Recurrence: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis'
- 2014: 'Centre-based day care for children younger than five years of age in high-income countries'
- 2013: 'Reporting Quality of Social and Psychological Intervention Trials: A Systematic Review of Reporting Guidelines and Trial Publications'
- 2013: 'Improving Positive Parenting Skills and Reducing Harsh and Abusive Parenting in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: A Systematic Review'

Supervision

The allocation of graduate supervision for this course is the responsibility of the Department of Social Policy and Intervention and it is not always possible to accommodate the preferences of incoming graduate students to work with a particular member of staff. Students are able to meet their potential supervisor in the first week of term. Under exceptional circumstances a supervisor may be found outside the Department of Social Policy and Intervention.

In the case of students who require specific help to adjust to an academic programme or to a new range of skills, the supervisor will work with them to ensure that they have additional support.

Assessment

Assessment will be based on your MPhil thesis. The thesis is undertaken throughout the duration of the course. You will also be assessed by a series of assessments throughout the year using a combination of examinations and/or submitted coursework assignments (summative assessments).

Changes to courses

The University will seek to deliver this course in accordance with the description set out above. However, there may be situations in which it is desirable or necessary for the University to make changes in course provision, either before or after registration. These may include significant changes made necessary by a pandemic (including Covid-19), epidemic or local health emergency. For further information, please see the University's Terms and Conditions (<http://www.graduate.ox.ac.uk/terms>) and our page on changes to courses (<http://www.graduate.ox.ac.uk/coursechanges>).

Expected length of course

	Full Time Only
Expected length	21 months

Costs

Annual fees for entry in 2023-24

Fee status	Annual Course fees
Home	£19,210
Overseas	£29,830

Information about course fees

Course fees are payable each year, for the duration of your fee liability (your fee liability is the length of time for which you are required to pay course fees). For courses lasting longer than one year, please be aware that fees will usually increase annually. Information about how much fees and other costs may increase is set out in the University's Terms and Conditions (<http://www.graduate.ox.ac.uk/terms>).

Course fees cover your teaching as well as other academic services and facilities provided to support your studies. Unless specified in the additional cost information (below), course fees do not cover your accommodation, residential costs or other living costs. They also don't cover any additional costs and charges that are outlined in the additional cost information.

Additional cost information

There are no compulsory elements of this course that entail additional costs beyond fees and living costs. However, as part of your course requirements, you may need to choose a dissertation, a project or a thesis topic. Please note that, depending on your choice of topic and the research required to complete it, you may incur additional expenses, such as travel expenses, research expenses, and field trips. You will need to meet these additional costs, although you may be able to apply for small grants from your department and/or college to help you cover some of these expenses.

Living costs

In addition to your course fees, you will need to ensure that you have adequate funds to support your living costs for the duration of your course.

The likely living costs for 2023-24 are published below. These costs are based on a single, full-time graduate student, with no dependants, living in Oxford. We provide the cost per month so you can multiply up by the number of months you expect to live in Oxford.

Likely living costs for one month

	Lower range	Upper range
Food	£300	£470
Accommodation	£715	£860
Personal items	£180	£305
Social activities	£40	£90
Study costs	£35	£80
Other	£20	£35
Total	£1,290	£1,840

Likely living costs for nine months

	Lower range	Upper range
Food	£2,700	£4,230
Accommodation	£6,435	£7,740
Personal items	£1,620	£2,745
Social activities	£360	£810
Study costs	£315	£720
Other	£180	£315
Total	£11,610	£16,560

Likely living costs for twelve months

	Lower range	Upper range
Food	£3,600	£5,640
Accommodation	£8,580	£10,320
Personal items	£2,160	£3,660
Social activities	£480	£1,080
Study costs	£420	£960
Other	£240	£420
Total	£15,480	£22,080

When planning your finances for any future years of study at Oxford beyond 2023-24, it is suggested that you allow for potential increases in living expenses of 5% or more each year – although this rate may vary significantly depending on how the national economic situation develops.

More information about how these figures have been calculated is available at www.graduate.ox.ac.uk/livingcosts.

Document accessibility

If you require an accessible version of the document please contact Graduate Admissions and Recruitment by email (graduate.admissions@admin.ox.ac.uk) or via the online form (<http://www.graduate.ox.ac.uk/ask>).