

Course Information Sheet for entry in 2023-24: MSc in Comparative Social Policy



About the course

The MSc in Comparative Social Policy explores welfare systems and policy developments across a range of countries with an OECD focus. The comparative element is a key part of the course, and is one feature that makes the course at Oxford unique.

The central aim of the course is to provide high quality graduate level research training in social policy, taking a comparative perspective, learning especially from the most highly-developed welfare states. More specific aims are to develop your capacity to:

- analyse, interpret and review the major concepts, theoretical approaches and historical and contemporary issues in social policy and welfare state development in a range of OECD countries;
- analyse and compare specific areas of social policy (for example income support, health or labour market) in different countries, drawing on both empirical data and broader theoretical literature; and
- undertake quantitative, qualitative and systematic reviews as part of the research methods paper, to understand the major issues involved in research design and technical analysis in social policy related research.

You will study a core paper in comparative social policy and social policy analysis. This paper covers the theories, principles, history and institutions of social policy, and is taught via a closely-linked package of lectures, seminars, small working groups and individual tutorials. You will also engage in detailed work on social policy analysis through lectures, seminars and presentations.

The research methods skills, covering quantitative methods, qualitative methods, and systematic reviews, are taught in a mix of lectures, classes, workshops and 'hands-on' computer lab based weekly training sessions. In addition, there is a course on the principles of comparative research design.

You will also have the opportunity to take at least one (usually two) specialist course from a list of options focusing on a particular social policy. You are examined in one of these option courses. Recent options offered include education policies, family policies, healthcare and health inequality, labour market policies, ageing societies and retirement age policies.

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 the remaining summative assessments, exam revision, and further development of the MSc thesis; an additional lecture and question/answer sessions is typically offered on an optional basis to support students in preparing for exams and/or assessments and using various methodologies for thesis projects.

Supervision

The allocation of graduate supervision for the course is the responsibility of the Department of Social Policy and Intervention and it is not always possible to accommodate the precise preferences of incoming graduate students to work with a particular member of staff. Under exceptional circumstances a supervisor may be found outside the Department of Social Policy and Intervention. Efforts will be made to match the research interests of supervisees and supervisors.

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.

Students will have approximately eight to twelve meetings with their supervisor, distributed over three terms.

Assessment

Your performance will be assessed through formative and summative assignments/papers. Knowledge of the substantive areas of social policy is assessed by a combination of examinations and/or submitted coursework assignments throughout the year. The assessment will cover comparative social policy and social policy analysis in general; the summative assignment will focus on your chosen area of specialism as represented in the option paper in which you choose to be assessed. Research methods will be assessed by a series of assessments throughout the year using a combination of examinations and/or submitted coursework assignments. In addition, you will be required to provide a dissertation.

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	12 months

Costs

Annual fees for entry in 2023-24

Fee status	Annual Course fees
Home	£19,950
Overseas	£30,910

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>).