

Course Information Sheet for entry in 2026-27: EcoWild (NERC CDT)



Course facts

Mode of study	Full Time	Part Time
Expected length	4 years	8 years

About the course

The EcoWild NERC Centre for Doctoral Training (CDT) programme has been designed to deliver the next generation of innovative researchers and conservationists needed to protect some of the Earth's most vulnerable and valuable ecosystems.

Multiple stressors, such as climatic extremes and chemical pollution, are driving biodiversity declines. Wetlands and fringing ecosystems are exceptionally biodiverse, critical for combating the climate emergency and essential for enhancing community resilience to extreme weather events such as storms and floods.

These ecosystems are among the most threatened globally, impacted by multiple environmental stressors. However, our understanding of these impacts is limited, thereby hindering conservation and restoration efforts, and impeding their potential as nature-based and bioengineered solutions. Each EcoWild Doctoral research project will address these knowledge gaps.

EcoWild is a unique partnership, led by Heriot-Watt University, that brings together research expertise and innovation across various fields of research and involves some of the leading UK experts in these areas.

Course structure

An overview of the course structure is provided below. Details of the optional elements of the course are provided in the *Course components* section of this page.

As a doctoral student, your primary focus will be your research and the majority of your time will, therefore, be spent in independent self-directed research and will involve a mixture of experimental, computational and observational activities.

Projects based at Oxford will be in the Department of Biology, which offers a friendly graduate community and provides a welcoming network to new students. The graduate student community offers a supportive environment, both social and scientific, allowing new graduates to develop into well- rounded and confident scientists.

To learn more about the research topics you'll have the opportunity to explore, please refer to the *Research areas* section on this page.

You will be part of a vibrant educational research community that includes an active set of doctoral student-led events, seminars and workshops.

Each year you will also receive world class taught training through a mix of in-person cohort-building events and online training. The training is enriched through the active involvement of the CDT's associated partners, who contribute to the design and delivery of the programme, organise challenge events, and offer secondments and internships. This provides students with valuable real world experience in addressing environmental problems and working in a professional environment.

Attendance

The course can be studied full-time or part-time with both modes requiring attendance in Oxford. Full-time students are subject to the [University's Residence requirements. \(//www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/after-you-apply/accommodation/residence-requirements\)](https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/after-you-apply/accommodation/residence-requirements). Part-time students are required to attend course-related activities in Oxford for a minimum of 30 days each year.

You will usually spend four years if you are studying full-time or eight years if studying part-time.

Provision exists for students on some courses to undertake their research in a 'well-founded laboratory' outside of the University. This may require travel to and attendance at a site that is not located in Oxford. Where known, existing collaborations will be outlined on this page. Please read the course information carefully, including the additional information about course fees and costs.

Resources to support your study

As a graduate student, you will have access to the University's wide range of resources including libraries, museums, galleries, digital resources and IT services.

The Bodleian Libraries is the largest library system in the UK. It includes the main Bodleian Library and libraries across Oxford, including major research libraries and faculty, department and institute libraries. Together, the Libraries hold more than 13 million printed items, provide access to e-journals, and contain outstanding special collections including rare books and manuscripts, classical papyri, maps, music, art and printed ephemera.

The University's IT Services is available to all students to support with core university IT systems and tools, as well as many other services and facilities. IT Services also offers a range of IT learning courses for students to support with learning and research, as well as [guidance on what technology to bring with you as a new student](https://www.it.ox.ac.uk/what-to-bring) (<https://www.it.ox.ac.uk/what-to-bring>) at Oxford.

The Department of Biology offers students access to desk space, research laboratories, and field research facilities. Most students will be based in the Life and Mind Building, but some research groups are based the John Krebs Field Station, or the Wildlife Conservation Research Unit. Many groups in the department also conduct research at field sites in the UK and overseas.

Supervision

The allocation of graduate supervision for this course is the responsibility of the Department of Biology and it is not always possible to accommodate the preferences of incoming graduate students to work with a particular member of staff. In some cases, a project might be offered with a lead supervisor in another department at Oxford.

Projects based at Oxford will be in the Department of Biology and your main supervisor will be based in this department. You will also have a co-supervisor from one of the other academic partners (Heriot-Watt University, University of York, University of the Highlands and Islands, Centre for Ecology and Hydrology) and a co-supervisor from a non-academic partner (such as Natural England, the Freshwater Biological Association, Scottish Government Marine and Fisheries).

You will have the opportunity to meet with a supervisor to assess progress and discuss academic issues. Most students meet with their supervisor twice a month on average, however this may vary.

Assessment

All students will be initially admitted to the status of Probationer Research Student (PRS). Within a maximum of six terms as a PRS student if studying full-time (around 12 terms if studying part-time), you will be expected to apply for transfer of status from Probationer Research Student to DPhil status. This application is normally made by the fourth term. (likely to be by the eight term for part-time students).

A successful transfer of status from PRS to DPhil status will require a report that will consist of an introductory part that could become the introduction to the thesis, one rather well-worked analysis of preliminary data representing roughly the equivalent of one thesis chapter, and a plan for the other chapters in the thesis including a detailed timetable. Students who are successful at transfer will also be expected to apply for and gain confirmation of DPhil status to show that your work continues to be on track. This will need to be done within nine terms of admission if studying full-time, or around 18 terms if studying part-time.

Both milestones normally involve an interview with two assessors (other than your supervisor) and therefore provide important experience for the final oral examination.

Full-time students will be expected to submit a substantial thesis of up to 50,000 words after four years from the date of admission, or after eight years for part-time students.

To be successfully awarded a DPhil in Biology you will need to defend your thesis orally (viva voce) in front of two appointed examiners.

Course components

Compulsory study

Each year you will also receive world class taught training in:

- multi-stressor science; and
- wetland ecology

This will be delivered as a mix of in-person cohort-building events and online training.

In addition to specialised training, EcoWild students will attend careers events and established workshops that align with the Vitae Research Development Framework. These include:

- data management
- time management
- leadership
- writing skills
- viva preparation

The CDT's associated partners may organise and offer the opportunity for you to participate in:

- challenge events
- secondments
- internships

Research areas

You'll have the opportunity to undertake research within the specialised themes of this course, which include:

- environmental toxicology
- ecology
- multiple stressor theory and modelling
- wetland conservation and restoration
- socioeconomics
- community engagement
- management and governance

Changes to this course

The University will seek to deliver this course in accordance with the description set out in this course page. 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. The safety of students, staff and visitors is paramount and major changes to delivery or services may have to be made if a pandemic, epidemic or local health emergency occurs. In addition, in certain circumstances, for example due to visa difficulties or because the health needs of students cannot be met, it may be necessary to make adjustments to course requirements for international study.

Where possible your academic supervisor will not change for the duration of your course. However, it may be necessary to assign a new academic supervisor during the course of study or before registration for reasons which might include illness, sabbatical leave, parental leave or change in employment.

For further information please see our page on [changes to courses \(//www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/courses/changes-to-courses\)](https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/courses/changes-to-courses) and the [provisions of the student contract \(//www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/after-you-apply/your-offer-and-contract\)](https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/after-you-apply/your-offer-and-contract) regarding changes to courses.

Costs

Annual course fees for the 2026-27 academic year at the University of Oxford

The fees for this course are charged on an annual basis.

Full-time study

Fee status	Annual Course fees
Home	£10,470
Overseas	£34,700

Part-time study

Fee status	Annual Course fees
Home	£5,235
Overseas	£17,350

What do course fees cover?

Course fees cover your teaching as well as other academic services and facilities provided to support your studies. Unless specified in the additional information section 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 costs information below.

How long do I need to pay 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 fees will usually increase annually, as explained in the University's [Terms and Conditions \(//www.ox.ac.uk/students/new/contract\)](https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/new/contract).

Graduate students who have reached the end of their standard period of fee liability will be required to pay a University continuation charge and/or a college continuation charge.

The University continuation charge, per term for entry in 2026-27 is £656, please be aware that this will increase annually. For part-time students, the termly charge will be half of the termly rate payable by full-time students.

If a college continuation charge applies (not applicable for non-matriculated courses) it will be between £150 and £500, as explained in our [information about continuation charges \(//www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/fees-and-other-charges/continuation-charges\)](https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/fees-and-other-charges/continuation-charges). Please contact your college for more details, including information about whether your college's continuation charge is applied at a different rate for part-time study.

Where can I find more information about fees?

Our [fees and other charges \(//www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/fees-and-other-charges\)](https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/fees-and-other-charges) pages provide further information, including details about:

- [course fees and fee liability \(//www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/fees-and-other-charges/courses-fees-and-liability\)](https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/fees-and-other-charges/courses-fees-and-liability);
- [how your fee status is determined \(//www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/fees-and-other-charges/fee-status\)](https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/fees-and-other-charges/fee-status);
- [changes to fees and other charges \(//www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/fees-and-other-charges/changes-to-fees-and-charges\)](https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/fees-and-other-charges/changes-to-fees-and-charges); and
- [continuation charges \(//www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/fees-and-other-charges/continuation-charges\)](https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/fees-and-other-charges/continuation-charges).

Information about how much fees and other costs will usually increase each academic year is set out in the University's [Terms and Conditions \(//www.ox.ac.uk/students/new/contract\)](https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/new/contract).

Additional costs

Full-time study

There are no compulsory elements of this course that entail additional costs beyond fees (or, after fee liability ends, continuation charges) and living costs. However, please note that, depending on your choice of research 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 to help you cover some of these expenses..

Part-time study

Please note that you are required to attend in Oxford for a minimum of 30 days each year, and you may incur additional travel and accommodation expenses for this. Also, depending on your choice of research topic and the research required to complete it, you may incur further 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 to help you cover some of these expenses. Part-time students who are not based in Oxford will need to calculate travel and accommodation costs carefully. Depending on your circumstances and study plans, this may include the cost of a visitor visa to attend for short blocks of time (assuming that visitor visa eligibility criteria are met).

Living costs

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

Living costs for full-time study

For the 2026-27 academic year, the range of likely living costs for a single, full-time student is between £1,405 and £2,105 for each month spent in Oxford. We provide the cost per month so you can multiply up by the number of months you expect to live in Oxford. Depending on your circumstances, you may also need to budget for the [costs of a student visa and immigration health surcharge](https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/living-costs) (<https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/living-costs>) and/or [living costs for family members or other dependants](https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/living-costs#field_listing_content_content-item--2) (https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/living-costs#field_listing_content_content-item--2) that you plan to bring with you to Oxford (if [dependant visa eligibility criteria](https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/visa/before/family) (<https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/visa/before/family>) are met).

Living costs for part-time study

Your living costs may vary depending on your personal circumstances but you will still need to cover your cost of living on a full-time basis for the duration of your course, even if you will not be based in Oxford throughout your studies. While the range of likely living costs for a single, full-time student living in Oxford in the 2026-27 academic year is between £1,405 and £2,105 per month, living costs outside Oxford may be different.

Part-time students who are not based in Oxford will need to calculate travel and accommodation costs carefully. Depending on your circumstances and study plans, this may include the [cost of a visitor visa to attend for short blocks of time](https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/living-costs) (<https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/living-costs>) (if [visitor visa eligibility criteria](https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/visa/before/visitors) (<https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/visa/before/visitors>) are met).

Further information about living costs

The current economic climate and periods of high national inflation in recent years make it harder to estimate potential changes to the cost of living over the next few years. For study in Oxford beyond the 2026-27 academic year, it is suggested that you budget for potential increases in living expenses of around 4% each year – although this rate may vary depending on the national economic situation.

A breakdown of likely living costs for one month during the 2026-27 academic year are shown below. These costs are based on a single, full-time graduate student, with no dependants, living in Oxford.

Likely living costs for one month in Oxford during the 2026-27 academic year

	Lower range	Upper range
Food	£315	£545
Accommodation	£825	£990
Personal items	£160	£310
Social activities	£50	£130
Study costs	£35	£90
Other	£20	£40
Total	£1,405	£2,105

For information about how these figures have been calculated as well as tables showing the likely living costs for nine and twelve months, please refer to the [living costs](https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/living-costs) (<https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/living-costs>) page of our website.

Document accessibility

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