

Course Information Sheet for entry in 2026-27: DPhil in Area Studies (China)



Course facts

Mode of study	Full Time	Part Time
Expected length	3 to 4 years	6 to 8 years

About the course

The DPhil in Area Studies (China) is a research-based course focused on contemporary China through topics like politics, sociology, economics, history, and culture; using interdisciplinary social science approaches.

The course offers the opportunity to undertake a doctoral project dedicated to the study of a specific country or region, or else to compare more than one region, using social science approaches whilst also generating theories and propositions that are of value across regions.

Looking beyond the big picture of globalisation and development, researchers at the Oxford School of Global and Area Studies (OSGA) examine the interplay between the local, the national, the regional, and the global to offer a better understanding of the contemporary world. Oxford's Area Studies department is consistently ranked amongst the top echelon and has been recently ranked by QS University Rankings as first in the world.

As a DPhil student, you will have access to outstanding research projects, seminar series, workshops and conferences and will have the chance to develop your work alongside academic staff who are experts in their fields. You will apply for admission to one of seven streams, which each have a distinct country or region of focus. This page describes the China stream of the course.

As a student of the China stream of this course, your research will usually be undertaken in collaboration with the school's Contemporary China Studies Programme (CCSP) (<https://www.ccsp.ox.ac.uk/about>).

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

During the first year of the course, if you are studying full-time, you will focus on developing your research questions, conceptual framework and methodological approaches for your thesis. You will participate in the first-year DPhil seminar series, the Global and Area Studies Programme's Competing Approaches in Area Studies course, and you will have the opportunity to attend other courses offered by the school as identified in your Training Needs Analysis. Your Training Needs Analysis will be discussed with your supervisor and reviewed on a regular basis. These requirements will be fulfilled over the first two years if you are studying part-time.

In your second year, or third and fourth years for part-time students, you will continue to implement your research plan through theoretical engagement and/or fieldwork, data collection and analysis. If you intend to undertake fieldwork as part of your research, you will be expected to attend a fieldwork safety course available through the Social Sciences Division.

During the third year for full-time students, or fifth and sixth years for part-time students, you will be required to participate in at least one conference, in the UK or internationally, presenting your work to a non-specialist audience, and to submit materials for Confirmation of Status as a doctoral researcher, as well as working towards the completion of your thesis.

The course aims to empower you to achieve the following learning outcomes:

- develop research skills in ways that are relevant to the study of areas and regions;
- build an interdisciplinary and/or comparative understanding of different regions;
- undertake original research which makes a significant contribution to the literature;
- communicate research to non-academic audiences in ways that ensure real-world impact; and
- present a lucid and scholarly thesis for examination.

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 (<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.

The full-time programme is studied over 3-4 years. The part-time programme has the same requirements but is studied over 6-8 years.

The part-time programme requires attendance at supervision meetings, seminars and skills training. Although you will not be required to live in Oxford, you will need to attend the University on a regular basis. You may expect to be in Oxford for a number of days per week during term-time for the first two years of the programme. There may be limited flexibility in the dates of attendance for the first two years as these will be determined by class schedules and term dates. During the later years of the programme, there may be more flexibility for arrangements which will be determined by mutual agreement with your supervisor.

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 Bodleian Social Science Library (SSL) is the main library for Area Studies. The SSL is housed on the ground floor of the Manor Road Building, and is open seven days a week during term-time. The library offers a variety of study spaces including graduate study rooms, individual study carrels, and group discussion rooms. The Social Sciences Library is complemented by the resources of the Bodleian library.

There is a room at the Oxford School of Global and Area Studies which is available to students for study purposes.

Supervision

For this course, the allocation of graduate supervision is the responsibility of the Oxford School of Global and Area Studies and it is not always possible to accommodate the preferences of incoming graduate students to work with a particular member of staff. Under exceptional circumstances a supervisor may be found outside the Oxford School of Global and Area Studies.

You will be assigned one or two supervisors, depending on your thesis subject. These supervisors will advise and guide you as you progress through the different stages of your research. Most students have the opportunity to meet with their supervisor on average two to three times per term. Ongoing support will be provided by your supervisor(s) during your studies and feedback will be received from peers and faculty members at the first-year DPhil seminars. Written feedback will be provided as part of the Transfer and Confirmation of Status procedures and after the final viva voce.

Assessment

Candidates for the DPhil are normally admitted with Probationer Research Student (PRS) status. As a PRS, you will develop your research proposal and skills, and produce a draft section or sections of your thesis, in order to apply for the Transfer of Status that will end your probationary period as a research student and give you full DPhil status.

Applications for Transfer of Status must be submitted within a maximum of four terms from admissions as a PRS (8 terms for part-time students). Once you have been admitted to full DPhil status, you will also be expected to apply for and gain confirmation of DPhil status, normally within nine terms of admission (18 terms for part-time students), to show that your work continues to be on track.

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

Students will be expected to submit their thesis three to four years after the date of admission (6-8 years for part-time students).

After submitting your finished thesis, you will be required to attend a viva voce (viva for short). The viva will be held by two examiners, one internal to the University and one external. The purpose of this is to enable the examiners to assure themselves that the thesis is your own work, to provide you with an opportunity to defend your thesis and to offer any necessary clarifications. A final copy of the thesis, incorporating any corrections, will be submitted after the viva.

Research areas

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

- Politics
- International Relations
- Sociology
- Economics
- History
- Culture.

Recent doctoral research projects undertaken by students undertaking the China stream include:

- Mental Health in China
- Geopolitics of Climate Change
- Rural Nostalgia in China

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	£22,600
Overseas	£32,960

Part-time study

Fee status	Annual Course fees
Home	£11,300
Overseas	£16,480

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. Standard travel insurance can be provided by the University. However, students may be required to pay any additional insurance premiums associated with travel to areas with an increased level of risk and/or for travel of more than 12 months' duration, and should factor this into their planning for fieldwork.

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 and/or college to help you cover some of these expenses. Standard travel insurance can be provided by the University. However, students may be required to pay any additional insurance premiums associated with travel to areas with an increased level of risk and/or for travel of more than 12 months duration, and should factor this into their planning for fieldwork.

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 ([//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 ([//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 ([//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 ([//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 ([//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 ([//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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