

Course Information Sheet for entry in 2026-27: DPhil in International Relations



Course facts

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

About the course

The DPhil in International Relations is a programme of doctoral research in the academic study of International Relations.

Doctoral students spend the first year of full-time study, or the first two years of part-time study, in the development of, and early work on, the thesis topic; in improving knowledge of research methods; in attendance at relevant lectures, seminars and classes; and in preparing to transfer from Probationer Research Student (PRS - the status with which you will normally be admitted - see *Assessment*) to full DPhil status.

An academic supervisor will advise and guide you as you progress through the different stages of your doctoral research. In the first year, you will take the Research Design and Methods (RDM) in International Relations course, and you are also recommended to complete one other methods course (either a statistics course in Michaelmas term or one of the courses in Hilary term). You are expected to attend the International Relations DPhil Research Seminar throughout the year and eventually to present your work there. For part-time students, these obligations are distributed across six terms.

Subsequent years are largely devoted to the development of the thesis project.

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

Doctoral theses will normally require substantial original research, often involving archives, fieldwork, interviewing or other forms of data generation and collection. For the doctoral degree the most crucial requirement is that the thesis makes a 'significant and substantial contribution to the field of knowledge within which it falls'. There are many ways of achieving this.

The department is committed to the rigorous use of a plurality of approaches and methods. There are many different ways of conducting research for a thesis. Any or all may be valid in a given case, depending on the subject of the research and the questions addressed. Some theses may involve an analytical-descriptive attempt at understanding different events, perspectives and traditions of thought. Others may have a strong historiographical element - exploring, for example, the relation between events and ideas, or involving an original and expert use of sources.

Others may involve advancing a hypothesis about a subject and then testing it with a range of qualitative and/or quantitative approaches. Apart from meeting the highest scholarly standards, there is no set template. There is also a strong and successful tradition of normative and critical work. The Oxford International Relations Network seeks to combine the best of North American political science with deep engagement with the international relations of different parts of the world and with the history of different traditions of thought on the subject.

As a DPhil student you will be a member of a distinguished academic community that is renowned for its cutting-edge research and its intensive and individualised teaching and supervision. The programme has received the highest level of recognition in national and international assessment exercises. It is a community from which you will draw support and guidance but which will also learn from your own contribution to its work.

You will have rich opportunities for connecting with fellow-students, postdoctoral fellows, and temporary and permanent academic staff involved in disciplinary and cross-disciplinary research programmes. The department attracts many of the world's leading figures in International Relations (IR) - as visiting scholars, speakers in the regular IR Colloquium, and participants in research conferences and workshops.

The Department of Politics and International Relations (DPIR) works with a range of research centres and programmes, such as the Oxford Institute for Ethics, Law and Armed Conflict (ELAC), the Centre for the Resolution of Intractable Conflict (CRIC), and the Changing Character of War Centre (CCW).

Research centres actively seek to develop collaborative research activity via conferences, workshops and other academic events. They provide opportunities for you to present your own work in research seminar series. The research centres have an established and popular visitors' programme which has allowed many scholars of international repute to participate in the DPIR's research activities.

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). ([//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.

Full-time and part-time students are required to attend classes, seminars, supervision meetings and other obligations in Oxford.

There will be limited flexibility in the dates and pattern of attendance. Attendance by part-time students will be required between one to three days a week during term-time throughout the first two years of your study on days determined by your class and seminar attendance and by your supervisor. Attendance may be required outside of term-time on dates to be determined by mutual agreement with your supervisor.

It is therefore likely that this course may be better suited to part-time students who are either already resident in Oxford or will live within commuting distance of the city.

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.

As a doctoral student of the department, you will have access to outstanding library and computing resources within the Social Sciences Division (of which the Department of Politics and International Relations is a major part), elsewhere in the University and, in most cases, in your college. The division runs network events to enable DPhil students to meet and network with their colleagues not only within Politics and International Relations but with other Social Science disciplines.

The [Bodleian Social Science Library](https://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/libraries/ssl) (<https://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/libraries/ssl>), located on the ground floor of the Manor Road Building houses the main collection for Politics and International Relations alongside a wide range of other social sciences resources.

The [Politics and International Relations subject guide](https://libguides.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/politics) (<https://libguides.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/politics>), provides up-to-date advice and the contact details of your Subject Librarian for further support.

Supervision

The allocation of graduate supervision for this course is the responsibility of the Department of Politics and International Relations and it is not always possible to accommodate the preferences of incoming graduate students to work with a particular member of staff. Supervisors are usually selected from the [academic staff](https://www.politics.ox.ac.uk/people.html?cat=14&lang=en&search=academic_profiles&task=search) (https://www.politics.ox.ac.uk/people.html?cat=14&lang=en&search=academic_profiles&task=search), within the Department of Politics and International Relations. Under exceptional circumstances a supervisor may be found outside the Department of Politics and International Relations.

You will conduct your own research under the guidance of your supervisor. You must be prepared to work on your own a good deal, and will need considerable personal motivation.

Assessment

Most applicants are admitted to the DPhil with Probationer Research Student (PRS) status. If you are entering the DPhil directly from the related MPhil at Oxford, you will normally be able to bypass the PRS stage and progress straight to DPhil status.

As a PRS, you will develop your research proposal and skills, complete a programme of research methods training (and associated assessments), and produce a draft section or sections of the thesis, in order to apply for the Transfer of Status that will end your probationary period.

Once you have been admitted to full DPhil status, you must achieve confirmation of that status by the end of your ninth term as a full-time doctoral student, or by the end of your eighteenth term as a part-time student. Once you have completed your thesis, you will be examined orally (*viva voce*).

Research areas

You'll have the opportunity to undertake research within the areas of expertise of the department's academic staff. These include:

- international history
- international relations theory
- strategic studies
- international organisation
- international political economy
- postcolonial international studies
- technology and global affairs
- international law
- international security
- cognitive international relations.

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	£17,310
Overseas	£32,960

Part-time study

Fee status	Annual Course fees
Home	£8,655
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 and vaccination expenses, conference attendance, 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

There are no compulsory elements of this course that entail additional costs beyond fees (or, after fee liability ends, continuation charges) and living costs. 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 and vaccination expenses, conference attendance, 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.

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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(graduate.admissions@admin.ox.ac.uk).