

Course Information Sheet for entry in 2025-26: MSc by Research in Biology



Course facts

Mode of study	Full Time Only
Expected length	2 to 3 years

About the course

The MSc by Research in Biology provides opportunities for graduates to develop knowledge, understanding and expertise in their chosen field of biology, beyond the level of a taught master's degree, but without conducting as much research as a doctoral student.

This programme offers advanced training in the latest research approaches whilst conducting independent research in your chosen field of biology, giving you the preparation and expertise required to bridge the gap between a taught degree and a DPhil/PhD or employment.

You will be expected to develop an original research project under the guidance of your academic supervisors and normally on a topic related to their areas of expertise. Research projects must be original and rigorous, and can be based on fieldwork (sometimes in remote places), laboratory experiments, analysis of existing data sets, or mathematical theory.

The majority of your time will be spent in independent self-directed research and will involve a mixture of experimental, computational and observational activities.

The Department of Biology offers a broad range of research opportunities for graduate students. As an MSc by Research student, your primary focus will be your research, which will be conducted with one or more of the existing research groups. Depending upon your research, you may work with different research groups within the Department of Biology and with collaborators in other departments or institutions.

You will be part of a vibrant educational research community that includes an active set of graduate student-led events, seminars and workshops. You will have the opportunity to present and discuss your work in progress with your supervisor, other faculty members and peers, informally day-to-day and by attending a variety of seminars and workshops in the department and at conferences elsewhere. In addition, you will be encouraged to make the most of the graduate training and research methods provision available across the Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences Division.

Attendance

The course is full-time and requires attendance in Oxford. Full-time students are subject to the University's Residence requirements.

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 world-class 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.

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 at the Peter Medawar Building for Pathogen Research, the John Krebs Field Station. 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. Under exceptional circumstances, a supervisor may be found outside the Department of Biology.

As a graduate student you will be embedded in the research groups of two or more members of academic staff who act as your supervisors and provide the bulk of the research guidance and training.

Most students have the opportunity to meet with their supervisor weekly or fortnightly to discuss their progress and developments in the field. However, this frequency may vary depending on the area of research, the nature of your project, and the stage of your studies.

Assessment

All students will be initially admitted to the status of Probationer Research Student (PRS). Within a maximum of four terms as a PRS student (and normally by the third term), you will be expected to apply for transfer of status from Probationer Research Student to MSc by Research status.

A successful transfer of status from PRS to MSc by Research 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 reasonably detailed plan for the other chapters in the thesis.

The transfer of status milestone will normally involve a structured discussion with two assessors (not your supervisor(s)) that will also provide you with formative advice and a useful experience for the final oral (*viva voce*) examination.

You will be expected to submit a substantial thesis of up to 25,000 words, after two years from the date of admission.

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

Changes to this course

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 you commence your course. These might include significant changes made necessary by any pandemic, 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>).

Costs

Annual course fees

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

Fees for the 2025-26 academic year at the University of Oxford

Fee status	Annual Course fees
Home	£10,070
Overseas	£33,370

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 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 information section 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, 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>).

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

The University continuation charge, per term for entry in 2025-26 is £672, 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 is likely to be in the region of £100 to £600. 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.

Additional cost information

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 and/or college 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.

The likely living costs for the 2025-26 academic year 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	£330	£515
Accommodation	£790	£955
Personal items	£200	£335
Social activities	£45	£100
Study costs	£40	£90
Other	£20	£40
Total	£1,425	£2,035

Likely living costs for nine months

	Lower range	Upper range
Food	£2,970	£4,635
Accommodation	£7,110	£8,595
Personal items	£1,800	£3,015
Social activities	£405	£900
Study costs	£360	£810
Other	£180	£360
Total	£12,825	£18,315

Likely living costs for twelve months

	Lower range	Upper range
Food	£3,960	£6,180
Accommodation	£9,480	£11,460
Personal items	£2,400	£4,020
Social activities	£540	£1,200
Study costs	£480	£1,080
Other	£240	£480
Total	£17,100	£24,420

When planning your finances for any future years of study at Oxford beyond the 2025-26 academic year, it is suggested that you allow for potential increases in living expenses of 4% each year – although this rate may vary depending on the national economic situation.

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

Document accessibility

If you require a more accessible version of this 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/form>).