

Course Information Sheet for entry in 2026-27: MSc in Archaeology



Course facts

Mode of study	Full Time Only
Expected length	11 months

About the course

The MSc in Archaeology provides an opportunity to specialise in one area of archaeology while offering both an excellent foundation for continuing to doctoral level, and transferable skills which are beneficial to a range of professional roles.

During this 11-month taught master's degree you will specialise in a particular area of archaeology, and will follow a subject stream, which will comprise four modules and a dissertation.

The MSc in Archaeology allows subject specialisation, but also flexibility, by combining core, stream and option modules, and topics chosen for your dissertation and summative pre-set essays. If you wish to specialise in the theory and practical applications of science in archaeology, please consider applying to the [MSc in Archaeological Science](https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/courses/msc-archaeological-science) (<https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/courses/msc-archaeological-science>) rather than the MSc in Archaeology.

Course structure

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

All students will complete a dissertation of 15,000 words on an approved topic relevant to your stream subject, chosen in consultation with a supervisor. Most of the dissertation research and writing takes place in the third term and into the summer. The dissertation allows you to develop a larger piece of research in which you can more fully explore a topic. It will allow you to develop your research skills and undertake self-directed and independent research that is a necessary basis for future doctoral research, and highly desirable in non-academic employment.

Teaching of stream modules is mainly through a combination of lectures and tutorials which are normally taught in small-groups. Other teaching methods may also include seminars, museum-based classes, laboratory work or other practicals, depending on your stream and module choices. You will usually prepare formative assignments on a weekly or fortnightly basis for your modules. The core Archaeological Principles: Data and Theory module is taught by lectures and seminars and will include group work; the assignments given in this module will form the basis of an assessed portfolio.

The teaching methods provide you with the opportunity to debate and discuss essays and topics on a regular basis with other students and teachers. Your assignments will also allow you to develop your writing and presentation skills. The seminars, museum-based classes, laboratory work and practicals provide an arena for you to engage with and develop techniques of analysis and evaluation.

You will have an academic advisor in your subject stream who will advise on module choices and monitor overall progress.

The teaching is supplemented by a wide range of lecture courses, seminar series, and the Graduate Archaeology at Oxford skills seminar series available in the School of Archaeology. The degree is a very intensive course, and you will be expected to treat the University vacations as integral parts of your academic work time.

Each member of the academic staff in archaeology normally offers at least one module in his or her areas of specialism over the year, but some modules or streams listed may not be available every year.

Graduate students run their own organisation, Graduate Archaeology at Oxford, which provides further skills seminars, a mentoring programme, social events and a very successful conference series. This provides many opportunities for you to develop your skills, present your research and develop ideas for the next stage of your career.

Attendance

The course is full-time and requires 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). (<https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/after-you-apply/accommodation/residence-requirements>)

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 School of Archaeology provides the following resources for students:

- computers with specialist GIS and mapping-related software
- a wide-range of digital facilities, including desktop imaging and manipulation for publication and dissertation/thesis production such as full-colour scanning of slides, negatives, maps and other paper plan originals
- lecture, seminar and common rooms
- a small library with a searchable catalogue available online in the Institute of Archaeology.

In addition, the Bodleian Art, Archaeology and Ancient World Library, a world-class library for archaeology, is situated between the Institute of Archaeology and the Ashmolean Museum, and is the central facility, providing for most student needs. Students also use the Balfour Library of anthropology and ethnography.

The School of Archaeology has close ties with the Ashmolean Museum and the Pitt Rivers Museum, the collections of which may contribute to graduate teaching.

Supervision

Every student will have a general supervisor appointed to them prior to the start of term. You will also be allocated a dissertation supervisor who, during your supervision meetings, will discuss and guide your research. They will usually be one of the teachers in your subject stream.

For this course, the allocation of graduate supervision is the responsibility of the School of Archaeology 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 School of Archaeology.

Assessment

You will be assessed through a variety of assessment methods including coursework (portfolio, take-home papers and/or extended essays), and a dissertation.

Course components

Compulsory study

You will choose from one of the following subject streams:

Archaeology of Asia

Core module: Archaeological Principles: Data and Theory

This core module, which all students take in the first term, is designed to prepare you with necessary archaeological knowledge, research and practical skills to support your other modules and dissertation.

Example List A modules - not all modules are offered every year

- Chinese Archaeology I: Neolithic to Bronze Age

Example List B modules - not all modules are offered every year

- Chinese Archaeology II: Shang to Qin
- Interdisciplinary Approaches to Chinese Ceramics
- Early Human Dispersals in Asia and the Pacific
- Archaeology of Eurasia
- The Emergence of Farming in Western Asia

Environmental Archaeology

Core module: Archaeological Principles: Data and Theory

This core module, which all students take in the first term, is designed to prepare you with necessary archaeological knowledge, research and practical skills to support your other modules and dissertation.

Example List A modules - not all modules are offered every year

- Environmental Archaeology

Example List B modules - not all modules are offered every year

- Practical Archaeobotany
- The Emergence of Farming in Western Asia
- Bio-Archaeology

Landscape Archaeology

Core module: Archaeological Principles: Data and Theory

This core module, which all students take in the first term, is designed to prepare you with necessary archaeological knowledge, research and practical skills to support your other modules and dissertation.

Example List A modules - not all modules are offered every year

- Landscape Archaeology and Spatial Technology

Example List B modules - not all modules are offered every year

- Archaeology and Geographical Information Systems

Maritime Archaeology

Core module: Archaeological Principles: Data and Theory

This core module, which all students take in the first term, is designed to prepare you with necessary archaeological knowledge, research and practical skills to support your other modules and dissertation.

Example List A modules - not all modules are offered every year

- Maritime Societies

Example List B modules - not all modules are offered every year

- Maritime Archaeology
- Methods and Techniques in Maritime Archaeology

Medieval Archaeology

Core module: Archaeological Principles: Data and Theory

This core module, which all students take in the first term, is designed to prepare you with necessary archaeological knowledge, research and practical skills to support your other modules and dissertation.

Example List A modules - not all modules are offered every year

- Europe in the Early Middle Ages (AD 400 - 900)
- Archaeology of Later Medieval Europe

Example List B modules - not all modules are offered every year

- Archaeology of Early Anglo-Saxon England
- Archaeology of Late Saxon England
- Body and Adornment: Material Culture of Later Medieval Britain (AD 1200 - 1600)
- Byzantine Constantinople
- Archaeology of Lived Religion in Late Antiquity
- Late Roman and Byzantine Architecture

Prehistory and Pre-colonial Archaeology

Core module: Archaeological Principles: Data and Theory

This core module, which all students take in the first term, is designed to prepare you with necessary archaeological knowledge, research and practical skills to support your other modules and dissertation.

Example List A modules - not all modules are offered every year

- European Prehistory from the Mesolithic to the Bronze Age
- Farming and States in Sub-Saharan Africa

- Archaeological Method and Theory

Example List B modules - not all modules are offered every year

- Archaeology of Southern African Hunter-Gatherers
- Early Human Dispersals in Asia and the Pacific

Social Archaeology

Core module: Archaeological Principles: Data and Theory

This core module, which all students take in the first term, is designed to prepare you with necessary archaeological knowledge, research and practical skills to support your other modules and dissertation.

Example List A modules - not all modules are offered every year

- Archaeological Method and Theory

Example List B modules - not all modules are offered every year

- Archaeology of Colonialism
- Archaeology of the Contemporary World
- Cognitive Archaeology

Dissertation

You will complete a dissertation on an approved topic relevant to your stream subject, chosen in consultation with a supervisor.

Options

In the first year, the fourth module is your option module, taught in the second term. This is chosen from all available modules in any stream, or an option from the MSt in Classical Archaeology. In some circumstances a subject taught in the MSc in Archaeological Science may be taken as your option module and is taught over two terms.

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

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

Fees for the 2026-27 academic year at the University of Oxford

Fee status	Annual Course fees
Home	£18,290
Overseas	£38,430

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).

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); and
- [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).

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

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 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 \(//www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/living-costs\)](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).

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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