

Course Information Sheet for entry in 2026-27: MSc in Archaeological Science



Course facts

Mode of study	Full Time Only
Expected length	12 months

About the course

The MSc in Archaeological Science is designed to give a broad but detailed grounding in the theory as well as practical experience in the major applications of science in archaeology.

The MSc in Archaeological Science provides a broad introductory education for those with a first degree in archaeology wishing to apply science-based research methods, or for those with a first degree in a science subject wishing to learn specifically about archaeological issues amenable to scientific methods.

It is intended for archaeologists or scientists who wish to go on to undertake research in archaeological science, or archaeologists who intend to pursue a career in the management of archaeological projects or become policy makers in this area and would like to have a sound understanding of the potential of science to elucidate archaeological problems. The MSc also acts as preliminary training for doctoral research.

Course structure

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

The MSc in Archaeological Science is based on the research strengths of the Research Laboratory for Archaeology. The MSc consists of three elements taught over two nine-week terms, comprising materials analysis and the study of technological change, molecular bioarchaeology, and principles and practice of scientific dating, plus a five-month research project chosen in consultation with the supervisor. The research project provides opportunity for specialisation within these areas.

Each course has a co-ordinator who will be responsible for arranging your teaching, while the course director has overall responsibility for your progress. You will also have a supervisor for your individual research project.

Teaching is through a combination of lectures, classes and laboratory sessions requiring regular written work, and is supplemented by a range of graduate seminars. The course benefits from the small size of the cohort (usually about eight), allowing many opportunities for student contribution. Class presentations are also required, providing valuable experience and the opportunity for feedback from your peers.

Graduate students run their own organisation, Graduate Archaeology at Oxford, which provides 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.

Archaeological Science students are all based at the School of Archaeology premises at 1 South Parks Road. You will also have the use of workspace in the Research Laboratory for Archaeology and the History of Art (RLAHA) which has desk space with points for laptop computers.

The RLAHA also has excellent laboratory facilities, which are available to students undertaking research for their dissertations. Within the School of Archaeology, there are computer rooms with specialist GIS and mapping-related software.

Oxford's Bodleian Libraries multiple institutes give students access to world class collections across every field. The Radcliffe Science Library is the university's main teaching and research library for sciences and will provide for the scientific aspects of student's needs. The Bodleian Art, Archaeology and Ancient World Library is the central facility for archaeology, classics, and art history, supplemented by the Balfour Library. The RLAHA library also carries some core texts and journals that can be viewed on site. The school has close ties with the University museums, including the Ashmolean Museum and the Pitt Rivers Museum, the collections of which contribute to graduate teaching.

Supervision

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. You will meet with your supervisor at least once a term.

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.

Assessment

The course is assessed using a diverse range of methods including written assignments (such as a lab report, blog and review article), written examinations, oral tasks (such as presentations and viva voce examination), and the submission of a dissertation.

Course components

Compulsory study

Principles and practice of scientific dating

This module covers the principles of the following scientific dating methods: radiocarbon, luminescence, tephrochronology, uranium series, and dendro-chronology. It also includes the practical aspects of these methods and the problems encountered in their application, as well as the statistical analysis of chronological information in the study of archaeological sites and cultures.

Molecular Bioarchaeology

This module teaches: the scientific methods for the study of biological remains from archaeological sites; introduces the analysis of plant and faunal remains, including indicators of disease and artefactual analysis; outlines the theoretical and practical aspects of quantitative methods for diet reconstruction by isotopic analysis; introduces ancient DNA studies; and provides an overview of residue analysis.

Materials analysis and the study of technological change

This module provides an introduction to the use of materials analysis on archaeological artefacts to characterise their chemistry and structure, with the aim of answering archaeological questions; Theoretical and practical aspects of analysis, the major techniques used and their strengths and weaknesses; An introduction to the fundamentals of material structure of the major classes of materials exploited in the past (metals, stone, ceramics, glass, organics), and theoretical and practical aspects of different types of materials analysis to discuss issues including the sourcing of raw materials and production processes.

Research project

You will also undertake a five-month research project chosen in consultation with the supervisor. The research project provides opportunity for specialisation within these areas.

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](http://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/courses/changes-to-courses) (<http://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/courses/changes-to-courses>) and the [provisions of the student contract](http://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/after-you-apply/your-offer-and-contract) (<http://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	£20,640
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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