

Course Information Sheet for entry in 2026-27: MSc in Environmental Change and Policy



Course facts

Mode of study	Full Time Only
Expected length	12 months

About the course

This MSc equips future environmental leaders with the critical thinking, research expertise, and analytical tools needed to design and evaluate policies for addressing the world's most pressing environmental challenges.

The MSc in Environmental Change and Policy (ECP) places strong emphasis on both environmental change and the policy and practice needed to respond to it, aligning with emerging demands in the field for graduates who can both understand and act upon environmental science.

Within the University, the course offers a unique blend of policy and environmental change studies. While it complements other environmental-related courses – such as those in environmental law, economics, and sustainability – it is distinctive in its focus on actionable policy design in the environmental sphere, a critically important area for addressing the world's most pressing environmental challenges.

The MSc ECP fills a gap in existing environmental courses by offering integrated, interdisciplinary training that not only connects global environmental changes with practical policy responses, but also explicitly links environmental research to policy-making – a feature that is not typically emphasised in both undergraduate and graduate environmental courses. Its focus on leadership development and research-based evidence for policy aligns with the needs of future employers in government, international agencies, and NGOs.

The course aims to:

- Examine the nature, causes and impacts of major types of global environmental changes, and how these changes operate and interact across space and time and in relation to physical, ecological, social and cultural systems.
- Engage the economic, legal, cultural, and ethical underpinnings of environmental responsibility and systemic policy solutions, including mitigation, adaptation, remediation, enhanced resource stewardship and other sustainable responses to environmental change across space and time.
- Empower environmental policy and decision makers with the analytical and practical skills, integrity, and a critical understanding of physical, ecological, social, and cultural systems in relation to environmental change, necessary to address the world's most pressing environmental problems.
- Integrate students into the world-leading research taking place in the Environmental Change Institute and the wider School of Geography and the Environment.
- Enhance students personal and professional development, embedding the knowledge and skills needed to go on to further advanced research, policy, academic business, NGO or other environmental leadership work in the Environmental Change Institute and elsewhere.

By the end of the course you will be able to design and evaluate actionable policies responding to environmental change. This will be achieved through the following key supporting outcomes:

- Understand and critically appraise the key drivers, dimensions, theories and debates related to environmental changes, their inter-connections, and to policy and action.
- Analyse, select, and apply key research skills, methods and techniques for understanding and responding to environmental change.
- Communicate and collaborate with diverse audiences to support environmental leadership and empowerment.

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.

The course is organised around three themes:

- Understanding environmental change
- Policy responses to environmental change
- Methods and techniques for evidence-based decision-making

The MSc is organised into six core modules and other elective modules. You will take three core modules in Michaelmas term, under the theme of understanding of environmental change and three core modules in Hilary term, under the theme of

policy responses to environmental change.

You will take two elective modules, one in Michaelmas term and one in Hilary term.

Field-based learning is a key component of the course. There will be day trips in Michaelmas and Hilary, and two core residential field trips – a scene-setting pre-course induction trip to the Lake District National Park (Michaelmas) around the understanding environmental change theme of the course, and a policy-focused trip to Brussels (Hilary Term) around the policy responses to environmental change theme of the course.

In addition to classroom and field-based learning, you will work on a research paper project, supported by a dedicated supervisor. You will develop your research topic during Michaelmas and Hilary, with most of the research and writing taking place in Trinity Term and over the summer months.

An independent and original dissertation is an integral component of the course. In order to equip you with the necessary skills to undertake high quality research, a suite of training activities is offered to develop key transferable skills in order for you to be able to execute high quality independent and original research. The dissertation will expose you to applied research methods used widely in academic and professional research.

The department has several research clusters, in biodiversity, ecosystems and conservation; climate systems and policy; landscape dynamics; technological life; economy and society; environmental interactions; and political worlds, which hold seminars throughout term-time. Graduate students are encouraged to attend these seminars.

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>)

During term time in Michaelmas and Hilary, a typical week will include core module and elective sessions, alongside a weekly 1-hour class meeting. Teaching styles may vary across the core and elective modules to reflect different learning objectives and instructor approaches. Core modules involve three hours of weekly teaching while elective modules offer eight hours of teaching spread across the term.

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 University of Oxford has an extensive library system and the Radcliffe Science Library is the main lending service within the University for the material required for the course. The Social Sciences Library also holds collections which are valuable for students pursuing geography programmes.

There is a dedicated social space for MSc students where you can meet and discuss your studies. Where appropriate, you will be able to use the departmental laboratories for your dissertation research.

Supervision

The course has an Academic Director and a Course Director who looks after the day to day running of the course.

The allocation of graduate supervision for this course is the responsibility of the Environmental Change Institute and School of Geography and the Environment 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 Geography and the Environment. Typically, students have eight hours of research supervision.

During the Michaelmas and Hilary terms, it is expected that the Course Director will act as your personal academic advisor.

For your dissertation, you will be assigned a supervisor with relevant expertise who is normally a member of the Environmental Change Institute's academic staff.

Assessment

The MSc ECP will be assessed by six summative assessments, which include a diverse range of assessment methods, including written assignments (such as a literature review, research proposal or policy brief), oral presentation, group-based assessment (such as a funding proposal), and a research paper (dissertation).

You will be supported for each of these assessments through a diverse range of formative assessments throughout the first two terms and across the various field trips.

Course components

Compulsory study

Core modules

The MSc is organised into six core modules:

1. Dimensions of Environmental Change

This module is designed to explore the multi-dimensions of environmental change, focusing on the science, governance, economic, social, and international perspectives.

2. Framings of Environmental Change and Policy

This module employs the concept of 'framing', using diverse disciplinary lenses, to examine core theories and debates related to environmental change and policy. Current concepts such as the "Anthropocene", "Sustainable Development", "Natural Capital", among others will be critically examined from multiple theoretical and socio-political perspectives.

3. Methods for Research

This module is designed to equip you with interdisciplinary methods (quantitative, qualitative, and geospatial) to inform research design and applications relevant to understanding environmental change, which are critical for informing policies to address key environmental challenges.

4. Systems Thinking for Environmental Change and Policy

This module is designed to explore how natural and social science dimensions of environmental change can be integrated in research and practice by recognising their dynamic interactions, trade-offs, synergies, and emergent phenomena within social, cultural, political, and power-laden contexts. It reflects how environmental issues arise and are governed in the real world.

5. Transformative Policy and Practice

This module is designed to engage you with key debates on transformative change, exploring diverse approaches across contexts such as food, energy, and land use. It fosters critical analysis, collaborative learning, and communication skills that support leadership and community empowerment in driving transformation.

6. Methods for Policy Analysis

This module is designed to equip you with interdisciplinary methods to inform decision-making about management of the environment. Examples will be drawn widely from environmental management, but with a particular emphasis upon decisions about adaptation and mitigation.

Field Trips

You will attend two core residential field trips. A scene-setting pre-course induction trip to the Lake District National Park (Michaelmas) around the understanding environmental change theme of the course, and a policy-focused trip to Brussels (Hilary Term) around the policy responses to environmental change theme of the course.

Dissertation

You will also submit a final dissertation.

Options

You will take two elective modules. The elective modules are shared with the other MSc courses in the School of Geography and the Environment and, therefore, encourage interdisciplinary thinking. These modules offer a teaching and discussion environment within smaller groups and are designed to provide formative support for the summative assessments. The elective modules available may vary from year to year.

Recent options have included:

- Decolonising Conservation
- A Global South perspective on climate change and climate justice
- Economics of Innovation and New Technologies
- Extractive compromises in the Ecuadorian Amazon
- Animal Geographies
- Climate Change, Communication and the Media
- Energy and the Environment
- Human-Wildlife Conflict and Coexistence: Theory and Practice.

The above list is an example of recent options, please note that available options may vary each year.

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	£26,820
Overseas	£36,170

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 \(https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/new/contract\)](https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/new/contract).

Our [fees and other charges \(https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/fees-and-other-charges\)](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 \(https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/fees-and-other-charges/courses-fees-and-liability\)](https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/fees-and-other-charges/courses-fees-and-liability);
- [how your fee status is determined \(https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/fees-and-other-charges/fee-status\)](https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/fees-and-other-charges/fee-status); and
- [changes to fees and other charges \(https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/fees-and-other-charges/changes-to-fees-and-charges\)](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 \(https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/new/contract\)](https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/new/contract).

Additional costs

In addition, as part of your course requirements, you will need to complete a dissertation as a compulsory part of the assessment for the course. Depending on your choice of topic and the research required to complete it, you may incur additional expenses, such as travel expenses to a field location and research expenses for equipment. These costs will vary according to the type of research. Some dissertations will use online data sources and there may be no additional costs beyond fees and living costs. If you choose to undertake research in the field, you may incur expenses in the range of £300-£1,500 or more. You will need to meet these additional costs yourself, although you may be able to apply for small grants from the department. There are no other compulsory elements of this course that entail additional costs beyond fees and living costs.

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).

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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