

Course Information Sheet for entry in 2025-26: MPhil in Evidence-Based Social Intervention and Policy Evaluation



Course facts

Mode of study	Full Time Only
Expected length	21 months

About the course

The MPhil in Evidence-Based Social Intervention and Policy Evaluation (EBSIPE) emphasises research methods for evaluating interventions and policies, as well as the advanced study of evidence-based practice and policy.

The MPhil is designed for students with a specific interest in understanding the effectiveness of policies, such as regulations concerning alcohol abuse or gun control, public health or poverty policies, and social interventions, such as cash transfers, parenting education, or violence prevention programs. It prepares students for a career in, for example, development, public policy, or policy and programme evaluation. Applicants with a professional background, such as those in evaluation, public health or policy consulting, will enhance their research skills and develop a major piece of research in a world-class environment.

This course aims to develop your critical analysis, problem solving and research skills in the field of evidence-based interventions and policies for social problems, which will allow you to be both a critical consumer of research and to carry out evaluations and other research designs. Your studies will consider evidence-based practice and policy in relation to, for example, children and families, poverty and inequality, mental health, refugees, drug use, violence and injury prevention, and offending.

Course structure

The MPhil has the following major components:

- pathway course, either Social Intervention or Policy Evaluation
- research methods training (Evaluation Methods, Quantitative Analysis, Qualitative Methods, Systematic Reviews)
- two specialist options, eg on Child and Family Interventions, Social Policies and Health Inequalities, Understanding and Preventing Interpersonal Violence, or Community Analysis and Large-Scale Interventions. In the second year it may be possible to select an option from Comparative Social Policy
- MPhil thesis

During the first and second terms, the majority of learning is classroom-based, complemented by independent reading, tutorials, and formative and summative assessments. The third term involves largely self-directed study for remaining summative assessments, exam/assessment revision, and further development of the MPhil thesis proposal. Additional lectures and question/answer are typically offered on an optional basis to support students in preparing for exams and/or assessments and using various methodologies for thesis projects. In subsequent terms, MPhil students follow a largely self-directed schedule based on remaining training needs/interests identified with their supervisor, enrol in a second specialist option course, and are encouraged to fully participate in regular seminars, colloquia, and research group meetings offered by the department.

Pathway course

You will select one of two available pathways, to be taken over two terms:

- Social Intervention, covering evidence-based methods to evaluate social interventions, theories underlying interventions, ethical issues, and applying research in practice and policy, including the challenges of implementing programmes in the real world; or
- Policy Evaluation, introducing you to social policy analysis, policy formation, and the relationship between evidence and policy, and to different research methods for evaluating policies, eg quasi-experimental designs, natural experiments.

You may be able to change your choice of pathway in the first week of the course.

Core course on research methods training

Students following the social intervention or policy evaluation pathway take an evaluation methods course. This course, taken over two terms, trains students to critically consume and produce evaluation research for policies and social interventions, focusing on multiple methods, including randomised controlled trials and quasi-randomised methods, and field methods, ie managing, costing and running real-world evaluations. The course has a strong focus on 'open science' and research transparency.

In addition, all students in the MPhil EBSIPE take the following methods courses: systematic reviews, quantitative analysis and qualitative methods

- systematic review ie finding, describing and synthesising the best available evidence, including meta-analysis and qualitative synthesis (2 terms)
- quantitative analysis ie key statistical concepts and learning statistical programming in the leading software, R (1 term)
- qualitative methods (including mixed methods) ie design, data collection, analysis and critical appraisal (1 term)

Specialist interdisciplinary training in systematic reviews has led to published masters' theses, for example:

- 2022: 'The Association of Traumatic Brain Injury with Neurologic and Psychiatric Illnesses among Individuals Experiencing Homelessness: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis'
- 2020: 'Evaluating the impact of penalising the use of mobile phones while driving on road traffic fatalities, serious injuries and mobile phone use: a systematic review'
- 2018: 'A cumulative meta-analysis of the effects of individual physical activity interventions targeting healthy adults'
- 2017: 'Parenting Programs for the Prevention of Child Physical Abuse Recurrence: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis'
- 2014: 'Centre-based day care for children younger than five years of age in high-income countries'
- 2013: 'Reporting Quality of Social and Psychological Intervention Trials: A Systematic Review of Reporting Guidelines and Trial Publications'
- 2013: 'Improving Positive Parenting Skills and Reducing Harsh and Abusive Parenting in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: A Systematic Review'

MPhil students may attend advanced methods classes, such as Intermediate Statistics, in their first and/or second terms.

Specialist options

You will take two one-term specialist courses from a list of options which may include Children and Families, Social Policies and Health Inequalities, Understanding and Preventing Interpersonal Violence, or Community Analysis and Large-Scale Interventions. The set of options offered each year will vary slightly depending on student interest and staff availability.

MPhil students may attend advanced methods classes, such as Intermediate Statistics, in their second year.

MPhil thesis

You will write a research thesis to acquire expert knowledge in your area of interest, to apply the research methods, and contribute to new scientific knowledge.

EBSIPE MPhil students will belong to the Centre of Evidence-based Intervention research group that gives an opportunity to explore topics around social intervention and policy evaluation in more depth. In their second year MPhil students will have the opportunity to present their thesis-project in the research group.

The department runs several seminar series during the year providing the opportunity to hear external expert speakers. In addition, there is a bi-weekly colloquium at which members of the department present and discuss their research, creating an excellent chance for staff and students to learn more about each other's' ideas or receive input on their own research.

The department's research methods hub provides research students with specialist support on qualitative and quantitative research methods, as well as tailored training. Through the Oxford social sciences division a range of methods-training seminars and summer schools are offered.

Attendance

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

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.

MPhil students have access to the world-leading Bodleian Social Science Library, in addition to other University libraries, and the centrally provided electronic resources (giving access to the majority of academic journals published).

The department provides a computer and workspace room for masters' students and has its own IT provision and specialist IT support staff. Students are able to book meeting spaces and lecture rooms to organise study groups.

The department has a common room open to both staff and students. Barnett House Coffee Mornings are held fortnightly and these occasions provide excellent opportunities for talking to academics and research staff, and also fellow students.

Supervision

The allocation of graduate supervision for this course is the responsibility of the Department of Social Policy and Intervention and it is not always possible to accommodate the preferences of incoming graduate students to work with a particular member of staff. Students are able to meet their potential supervisor in the first week of term. Under exceptional circumstances a supervisor may be found outside the Department of Social Policy and Intervention.

In the case of students who require specific help to adjust to an academic programme or to a new range of skills, the supervisor will work with them to ensure that they have additional support.

Assessment

Assessment will be based on your MPhil thesis. The thesis is undertaken throughout the duration of the course. You will also be assessed by a series of assessments throughout each year using a combination of examinations and/or submitted coursework assignments (summative assessments).

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 fees for entry in 2025-26

Fee status	Annual Course fees
Home	£21,320
Overseas	£33,100

Information about 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>).

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 cost information.

Additional cost information

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 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>).