

Course Information Sheet for entry in 2026-27: MPhil in History (Early Modern History 1500-1700)



Course facts

Mode of study	Full Time Only
Expected length	21 months

About the course

The MPhil in History (Early Modern 1500-1700) will introduce you to the latest developments in the study of British, European, and World history in the early modern period.

The MPhil includes a sustained period devoted to archival research and writing, and is designed to give you a thorough training in historical research, improve your ability to conceptualise and engage with historical problems, and enlarge your understanding of the historical and historiographical context in which your own research is set. The course can serve as either a free-standing graduate qualification, or as a springboard to doctoral study. Students wishing to proceed to doctoral study will be encouraged to develop their doctoral proposals during the first few months of the second year. Skills training and option-choice are flexible and open-ended, to allow you to gain the knowledge and training needed to complete your research project.

From the Reformation and Counter-Reformation to the Enlightenment, you will look at how the world was transformed by the new encounters between civilisations. You will explore the visual and material culture of the Renaissance and Baroque, and ask how the idea of the self developed, you will track changes in warfare and the growth of the state, and examine how gender relations were transformed and social hierarchies challenged.

Oxford has one of the largest groups of Early Modernists in the world, with multidisciplinary research activities being brought together by the [Centre for Early Modern Studies \(https://earlymodern.web.ox.ac.uk/home\)](https://earlymodern.web.ox.ac.uk/home). Further information about Early Modern [research and activities \(https://www.history.ox.ac.uk/early-modern-history-1500-1700\)](https://www.history.ox.ac.uk/early-modern-history-1500-1700) can be found through the faculty website.

All graduate students are encouraged to engage with the faculty's lively research culture of [seminars, workshops, and discussions groups \(https://www.history.ox.ac.uk/research-seminars\)](https://www.history.ox.ac.uk/research-seminars). There's something happening nearly every day of the week and sessions often involve leading international scholars. The faculty also runs the [Oxford History Graduate Network \(https://www.history.ox.ac.uk/oxford-history-graduate-network\)](https://www.history.ox.ac.uk/oxford-history-graduate-network), which fosters conversation and collaboration between graduate students. Interdisciplinary activities are available through [The Oxford Centre for Research in the Humanities \(TORCH\) \(http://www.torch.ox.ac.uk\)](http://www.torch.ox.ac.uk).

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.

You will take two compulsory core courses, a research masterclass, two optional subject courses, and undertake an original research project. Courses and research are supported by a skills programme for general historical or field-specific training. This structure gives access to a wide range of both general and specialised training within the field of history.

Additional lectures, classes, and tutorials take place in Michaelmas and Hilary terms to provide general and specific training. You will discuss what training you need to undertake your research project with your supervisor. Training available includes document and object handling, palaeography, oral history, text analysis software, GIS software, and statistical analysis.

Language training is also available, with the Faculty organising special courses for historians in French, German, Spanish, and Italian. Other modern language courses are available through the University's Language Centre. Courses in Latin and other medieval languages are also available. Further details on [language learning \(https://www.history.ox.ac.uk/language-learning-history-postgraduates\)](https://www.history.ox.ac.uk/language-learning-history-postgraduates) can be found on the faculty website.

The faculty runs an intensive three-week pre-term Latin course specifically designed for incoming students on Early Modern and Medieval courses with limited (or no) background in Latin. Weekly Latin classes are available during term-time to improve your Latin skills. As knowledge of Latin is essential to work on primary sources, these courses are provided without additional cost. Incoming students will be contacted over the summer with details of the pre-term course. Further details on language learning can be found on the [faculty website \(https://www.history.ox.ac.uk/language-learning-history-postgraduates\)](https://www.history.ox.ac.uk/language-learning-history-postgraduates).

You will have access to some of the most advanced digital human resources in the UK, and will be able to acquire the palaeographical skills needed to read manuscripts and archival material.

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.

You will be able to draw on the specialist resources offered by the Bodleian History Faculty Library which provides dedicated support and training courses for all graduates. You can also access the many college libraries and college archives which house significant collections of personal papers as well as institutional records dating back to the middle ages.

Supervision

The allocation of graduate supervision for this course is the responsibility of the Faculty of History and it is not always possible to accommodate the preferences of incoming graduate students to work with a particular member of staff. Offers will only be made if appropriate supervision is available.

It is usual practice that MPhil students have one supervisor, but a co-supervisor will be appointed if additional specialist knowledge is required. One supervisor must be a member of the Faculty of History, but a co-supervisor can be appointed from a different department.

Your supervisor(s) is there to provide advice, guidance, and support throughout. You should arrange to meet your supervisor(s) early in your first term to establish a clear framework for your research and writing, and identify any skills training needed to undertake your research. There is no set timetable for the frequency of future meetings, but it is recommended that you arrange to meet your supervisor several times each term, to discuss progress of your research and writing. You should also agree a timetable for the submission and return of drafts of your dissertation.

If you contact a potential supervisor prior to submitting your application, any indication made by an academic that they may be willing to supervise a potential project, is not a guarantee that you will be offered a place, or that the supervisor in question has capacity to supervise you in that particular year.

Assessment

The Historical Methods course is assessed by an essay on historical methods submitted at the end of Hilary term of year one, at which time you must also submit an annotated bibliography and dissertation proposal.

The Writing History course is assessed by an essay submitted at the end of Trinity term of year one.

The Research Masterclass is assessed by a seminar presentation which you will give in year two.

The optional subject courses are assessed according to the regulations for those courses at the end of Michaelmas and Hilary terms.

Finally, the research project is examined by a 30,000-word dissertation that is submitted in week six of Trinity term of year two.

Course components

Compulsory study

You will take three core courses and undertake a research project.

Core course - Historical Methods

The Historical Methods course is a fortnightly, two-hour class designed to be specific to the strand you will be studying, and you will be taught as a group within your strand (including MSt students). The course will include general theoretical and methodological concepts and some specific historiographical topics.

Core course - Writing History

The Writing History course is a weekly class in Trinity term of the first year, exclusively for MPhil students, with all MPhil students taught in one or two classes. The classes range widely across history and involve critical reading and thinking about published work.

Core course - Research Masterclass

Research Masterclasses are weekly classes in Michaelmas term of the second year, exclusively for MPhil students, during which students present and receive feedback on their work.

Research project

You will work on original research project throughout both years, under the guidance of your supervisor. You are expected to commit the summer vacation between the two years and the Michaelmas term of the second year to archival research.

Recent topics of MSt and MPhil research have included:

- The effects of the English Reformation on socio-economic relations in early modern England
- Academic life of Moscow University in the eighteenth century
- Levels of female involvement within the sixteenth-century commercial environment in England
- The growth of the professional diplomat in the long sixteenth century: an Eastern Mediterranean perspective
- Sex and Subcultures in Arts Clubs and Societies in London in the 18th Century
- Pauper petitions and survival strategies in 17th-century England
- 'Ragged, and Torne, and True': Conceptions and Depictions of Poverty in England and the Netherlands, 1500-1650
- The Suffering Christ: piety and identity in print and prayer, 1450-1550
- Performance of the Condemned: Newgate 1676-1772
- Doubt and Conscience in the life and writings of Thomas More.

Options

You will take two subject courses chosen from a list of around 30 which are offered each year. Subject courses consist of six two-hour tutor-led group classes taught in Michaelmas and Hilary terms of year one. Not every subject will be available every year.

Recent subject courses particularly relevant to Early Modern history (1500-1700) include:

- State and Society in Early Modern Europe
- The Dawn of the Global World, 1450-1800: ideas, objects, connections
- The Enlightenment, c.1680-1800: Ideas and the Public Sphere
- The Iberian Global Empires (1450-1700) and their Archive(s)
- Early Modern Venice and Istanbul: Connected and Comparative Cultural Histories
- Microhistory and its uses in Early Modern history
- European Reformations, c.1480-1600
- Race, Law, and Empire, c.1600-1850
- Navies and Economics: Britain and France, 1660-1815
- Falling for Growth: Capitalism, Ecology, and Planetary Limits

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](https://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](https://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	£17,910
Overseas	£43,730

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 the course requirements, students may need to choose a dissertation, a project or a thesis topic. Please note that, depending on the choice of topic and the research required to complete it, there may be additional expenses, such as travel expenses, research expenses, and field trips. Students will need to meet these additional costs, although they may be able to apply for small grants from their faculty to help 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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