

Course Information Sheet for entry in 2026-27: MPhil in Music (Composition)



Course facts

Mode of study	Full Time Only
Expected length	21 months

About the course

The MPhil is designed for students wishing to attain a thorough grounding in composition at an advanced level, either as a preparation for doctoral research or an autonomous qualification.

The Master of Philosophy in Music (Composition) introduces a broad range of current methodologies and approaches in music scholarship.

The first year of the course is identical to that of the [MSt in Music \(Composition\)](https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/courses/mst-music-composition). The main teaching and coursework is completed in the first two terms; the third is reserved for completion of assessed work.

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.

In the Michaelmas term there are typically six core topics:

- historical musicology
- current trends in music theory
- aesthetics
- the social and cultural study of music
- performance
- composition.

Each year a number of faculty members convene a series of elective seminars based on their research interests, to help you prepare for your assessment essays. You are invited to attend as many of these seminars as you wish. Reading lists are sent out before the start of the courses and you are asked to prepare fully and contribute to the seminars.

Presentation seminars are held in Trinity term. Musicologists, performers and composers each prepare a presentation on their own research and are asked to respond to another student's presentation in another; further feedback on presentation skills is received from the seminar convenor.

Second year

The second year is spent producing coursework, comprising a project and a portfolio (see the Assessment section below for further details). Students will have the opportunity to meet with their supervisor, but will not be expected to attend taught 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).

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 Faculty of Music is located in the Stephen A. Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities. Facilities include:

- practice rooms, and a larger ensemble room
- three music studios
- access to the Recital Hall
- The Black Box, a technology-enabled space to use for experimental electronic music compositions, multimedia works, experimental performances, and practice-based research. It is possible to rig the space in various ways, including with a 56-speaker array to create an immersive sound experience
- 500 seat concert hall
- film screening theatre

Libraries

The University's Bodleian Library, receives every important British musicological study, in addition to acquiring most major books and editions published elsewhere; it has particularly important collections of printed sources for early music theory and nineteenth-century sheet music. Its manuscript collection contains many important sources for early English and European music, as do several college libraries.

Other significant research collections are held at the Taylorian Library (modern languages), the Bodleian Art, Archaeology and Ancient World Library and the Maison Française.

Oxford's three important collections of musical instruments are the faculty's Bate Collection, the Ashmolean Museum's Hill Collection of old stringed and keyboard instruments, and the Pitt Rivers Museum's extensive collection of ethnographic materials.

Library resources for Music are in the new Humanities Library in the Stephen A. Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities. The library brings together seven libraries and collections: English language and literature, film studies, history of medicine, music, philosophy, theology and religion, and internet studies.

Schwartzman Studio facilities

The Schwartzman studios are available to use by Music Faculty students for their portfolio work.

Music Studio 1

Will be a professional acoustically designed music composition, production and mixing room, able to accommodate both stereo and the immersive broadcast and recording standard - Dolby Atmos 9.1.4. It will digitally connect to almost all the performance spaces in the Schwartzman building and will be able to simultaneously record up to sixty musicians directly in the new Concert Hall.

Music Studio 2

Will be a professionally designed experimental music and acoustics research space, able to accommodate many different listening formats, from stereo to Ambisonics, Dolby Atmos, D&B Soundscape and others. It will have a permanent but adjustable '3D' 22.2 loudspeaker array. The studio will contain a range of experimental electronic music instruments and will be inherently flexible by design, with connections to all performance spaces, but a design bias to working symbiotically with the Black Box.

Music Studio 3

Will be a 'trad' recording studio directly connected and adjacent to the 'Ensemble Room' and practice rooms on the ground floor. It will house a 32 channel all analogue vintage aesthetic Harrison recording console, with an array of choice microphones for recording small to medium sized ensemble performance: from soloist to quartet, Jazz, Rock and Pop.

Supervision

The allocation of graduate supervision for this course is the responsibility of the Faculty of Music 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 Faculty of Music. All students receive supervision from an appropriate specialist on their chosen topic.

Students can usually expect to meet with their supervisor between two and three times a term, depending on the needs of the student and at the discretion of the supervisor.

Assessment

As the first year is identical to the MSt in Music (Composition), assessment will be through a musical composition in response to techniques presented in core composition seminars at the end of Michaelmas term. This will be followed by an essay submitted at the end of Hilary term. The final assessment of the first year includes a further essay in musicology or a further musical composition produced in response to techniques presented in composition seminars; and a larger musical composition or portfolio of compositions, at the end of Trinity term.

In order to proceed to the second year of the MPhil, you will normally need to obtain an average of 65% for your first year work overall, and a mark of over 70 in your composition portfolio.

The second year is spent producing coursework, comprising a project (which could be a short dissertation, analysis portfolio, portfolio of essays of ethnomusicological work, or critical edition) and a portfolio of at least two well-contrasted compositions.

Course components

Compulsory study

Core seminars

In the Michaelmas term there are typically six topics:

- historical musicology
- current trends in music theory
- aesthetics
- the social and cultural study of music
- performance
- composition.

You may participate in as many of these seminars as you like. Your first summative assessment will be a compositional exercise written in response to the composition core seminar.

You must work on a project and portfolio in the second year.

Options

Recent seminar series included the following options:

- Pitch, Amplitude, Timbre
- Brazilian Music
- Distributed Creativity in Composition and Performance
- Thirteenth-Century Motets
- Music and (Non) Religion
- Music and Race
- Gender and Sexuality in Popular Music Studies
- Music and Islamic Culture
- Beethoven between History and Myth.

Most of the electives take place in Hilary term. You can attend as many as you like.

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	£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

If you require a more accessible version of this document please [contact Graduate Admissions and Recruitment by email \(graduate.admissions@admin.ox.ac.uk\)](mailto:graduate.admissions@admin.ox.ac.uk).