

Course Information Sheet for entry in 2026-27: MPhil in Modern Middle Eastern Studies



Course facts

Mode of study	Full Time Only
Expected length	21 months

About the course

The MPhil in Modern Middle Eastern Studies is a two-year taught course offering intensive Middle Eastern language training, research methods, and thematic study of the region across social sciences and humanities.

The MPhil in Modern Middle Eastern Studies accepts students who are complete beginners in a Middle Eastern language (Arabic, Hebrew, Persian or Turkish). The course also accommodates students in Turkish and Arabic at an advanced level, as well as Arabic at an intermediate level. If you already have research-level proficiency in one of these languages you will be required to take a different language.

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.

Intensive language training takes place in classes and language laboratories through all six terms of the course.

In the first term you are expected to attend the weekly MPhil Qualitative Research Methods for Modern Middle Eastern Studies lecture and seminar. You will be encouraged to attend other lectures and seminars offered by the teaching staff.

In the second, third and fourth term of the course, you will attend three tutorial options.

In the third term you will begin your thesis preparations, meeting with staff members to identify a thesis supervisor.

During the long vacation from the end of June to early October you are urged to pursue intensive language training in an appropriate course in the region, political circumstances permitting. You are encouraged to take the opportunity provided by study abroad to conduct research for your thesis in the region.

In your second year, you will continue language training, have tutorials for your third option and work on your thesis. Over the Christmas vacation research and writing of the thesis should continue. In the second term, you will attend an MPhil research seminar where you will present your research findings to your peers and faculty.

To complement your studies, you will have the option to attend seminars and lectures at The Middle East Centre (MEC), which serves as both the University's Middle East Studies centre and as an Area Studies Centre of St Antony's College. It hosts a weekly seminar, and an annual lecture, The George Antonius Annual Lecture in Trinity (summer) term.

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). ([/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 the long vacation from the end of June, in the first year of study, to early October you will be encouraged to attend language training in an appropriate course in the region, political circumstances permitting.

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 resources of the Middle East Centre (MEC) are available to all members of the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies. The MEC library holds around 35,000 books in Western and Middle Eastern languages, with an emphasis on the 18th century to the present. The MEC holds an extensive collection of journals and periodicals, and receives newspapers in Arabic, Persian, Turkish and Hebrew. It holds a rare book collection and an extensive microfilm and microfiche collection. The MEC is home to the Private Papers Collection and photographic archive.

Aside from the MEC, there are three other libraries that will be of use to students on the MPhil Modern Middle Eastern Studies course. The Nizami Ganjavi Library, part of the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, houses the collection of books and periodicals in Western and Middle Eastern languages with a particular emphasis on the period from the rise of Islam to the early modern period. The Charles Wendell David Reading Room of the Weston Library is the means of access to the extensive Asian and Middle Eastern manuscript collection as well as reference works and secondary sources received on deposit by the Bodleian Library. Finally, Wadham College library houses a collection of Persian books.

You will have access to the University's centrally provided electronic resources, the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies' IT Officer, and other bibliographic, archive or material sources as appropriate to the topic. There is a computing room for the use of graduate students in the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, as well as a common room where refreshments are available and staff and students can meet.

Supervision

The allocation of University supervision for this course is the responsibility of the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies and it is not always possible to accommodate the preferences of incoming graduate students to work with a particular member of staff. University supervision and thesis supervision are separate roles. Students can secure thesis supervision from a member of staff other than their University supervisor. Under exceptional circumstances a thesis supervisor may be found outside the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies.

Assessment

You are evaluated in five areas: a language examination, three written examinations on course options taught through tutorials and lectures, and a thesis.

You will complete and submit a take-home written assignment based on the Qualitative Research Methods Seminar after the end of the first term which will form the first of two elements of your Qualifying Examination. The second element of the Qualifying Examination is a language qualifying examination taken at the end of the first year (first three terms) of the course. The final examination is held at the end of the final term.

Further information on the course, and the examination process, can be found in the course handbook via the course webpage on the faculty's website.

Course components

Compulsory study

Intensive language training takes place through all six terms of the course.

Year 1

In the first term you are expected to attend the weekly MPhil Qualitative Research Methods for Modern Middle Eastern Studies lecture and seminar. The seminar is an interactive forum in which you are expected to present arguments and to respond to the lecture, associated readings, and each other's formative essays, which are a crucial element of teaching, but do not count toward your final marks.

In the second term, in consultation with your supervisor, you will attend a series of tutorials for one of three options to be offered for the final examination. In the third term, you will have tutorials for the second of your three options and you will begin your thesis preparations.

Year 2

In the first term of the second year, you will have tutorials for your third option.

In the second term, you will attend a MPhil research seminar where you will present your research findings to your peers and faculty.

A complete draft of your thesis should be ready for the supervisor to assess by the end of the second term. In the final term, you will submit your thesis.

Options

Tutorial options are subject to availability each year and selected in consultation with your supervisor. Tutorials typically involve weekly meetings and between four and six formative essays, arranged between you and your tutor.

Most options have an associated lecture series, either concurrent with the tutorials or in some cases delivered in a different term, which you are expected to attend. Those offered on a regular basis include the following:

- Authoritarian Politics in the Middle East and North Africa
- Clerical Institutions in Contemporary Iran
- Computational Methods for Area Studies
- History and Politics of the Islamic Republic of Iran
- History of the Maghreb since 1830
- History of the Middle East, 1860-1970
- Main Themes in Israeli Politics and Society
- Mass Media in the Middle East
- Modern Islamic Thought
- Modern Turkish Literature: Texts and Contexts
- The Political Economy of the Middle East and North Africa
- Political Islam, Islamism and Modern Islamic Movements
- Politics of the Maghreb
- Politics of the Middle East
- Race and Slavery in the Arabian Peninsula
- Social Anthropology of the Middle East.

You may wish to confirm with the course coordinator that a specific option listed above will be available to your cohort, as scheduled sabbaticals or other research leave may sometimes interrupt the annual teaching schedule.

During the long vacation from the end of June to early October you are urged to pursue intensive language training in an appropriate course in the region, political circumstances permitting. Information on the different courses can be obtained from the relevant language instructors, in consultation with supervisors. You are encouraged to take the opportunity provided by study abroad to conduct research for your thesis in the region.

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	£23,870
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

You will normally be expected to spend the summer after your first year attending an intensive language course in the Middle East. The faculty estimates the cost of attendance to be between £1,400 and £3,000, depending on the country and the fees charged by the various institutes that provide such courses. This estimate includes tuition fees, living expenses (both housing and food) and airfare. The faculty currently provides some funding toward these 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 \(//www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/living-costs\)](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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