

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

Course facts

Mode of study	Full Time Only
Expected length	21 months



About the course

The MPhil in Modern Chinese Studies, offered jointly by the Oxford School of Global and Area Studies (OSGA) and Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, combines intensive study of the Chinese language with training in the study of modern China.

The MPhil in Modern Chinese Studies is suitable for graduates who have developed an interest in China and now want to take that to a level where it could be useful for their future careers. It can be taken either as a terminal degree in preparation for professional work in which knowledge of China and Chinese is an advantage, or in preparation for further research as part of a doctoral degree in either the humanities or social sciences.

The aims of the course are to provide a strong grounding in modern Chinese language, both written and spoken, a strong foundation in understanding modern Chinese society and culture, and advanced training in conducting and reporting on independent and original research.

Knowing the Chinese language is essential for anyone who wants to understand China and the course is designed to provide this at both elementary and intermediate levels. You will be allocated to the appropriate level by a placement test on arrival.

Elementary level will be for students who are complete beginners or are false beginners, but not up to the next level. Students are taught reading, writing and translation skills as well as speaking and listening. Intermediate level will be for students who have excelled at the beginner level, are confident in daily communication and able to recognise and write about 500 to 550 Chinese characters. Students must have learnt most of the main grammar points to enter the intermediate level.

Due to the intensive language teaching element of the course, this degree is not appropriate for applicants with fluent or native Chinese language ability. Instead they are encouraged to apply for the [MSc in Contemporary Chinese Studies](https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/courses/msc-contemporary-chinese-studies) ([//www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/courses/msc-contemporary-chinese-studies](https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/courses/msc-contemporary-chinese-studies)) degree.

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 overall structure of the course is as follows:

1. Chinese Language at level 1 (elementary) or level 2 (intermediate). Candidates will be allocated to these levels by a placement test
2. Compulsory core course on The Study of Contemporary China (SOCC)
3. Methodology Training: Candidates can choose between two courses focused on either social sciences or humanities approaches to modern China
4. Elective papers: Candidates must choose two option papers, one per year
5. Thesis of 20,000 words

You will spend the first year of the course in Oxford, studying Chinese language alongside core classes in the interdisciplinary study of China and either research methods in the social sciences or Modern China Humanities. You will choose from a range of options, shared with the MSc in Contemporary Chinese Studies, which allow you opportunities to acquire advanced knowledge of the society, politics, economics, international relations, history, literature and art of modern China.

The Oxford China Centre organises weekly seminars during term-time. You should regard attendance at these seminars as an integral part of your programme. In addition, research seminars about China are organised in departments and colleges across Oxford.

The first part of the second year consists of a period of at least three months on an approved course of language study in mainland China or Taiwan. In addition, the second year consists of continued coursework as well as independent research that culminates in a thesis.

As this course involves language learning in addition to core and option courses, you will have a large number of classroom hours. The exact number of hours per week varies according to the level of language learning. However, whatever the level, students find that most of their time throughout the two years is taken up with classes and the regular preparation and homework required for those classes.

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))

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 Dickson Poon Oxford China Centre, based on Canterbury Road, brings together academics drawn from across a range of disciplines, who have in common research and teaching interests related to China. The building has a lecture theatre, a dining area and a range of conference and seminar facilities. These facilities provide opportunities for interaction with students on a range of China-related degrees as well as lectures and other academic activities.

The [Bodleian Chinese Studies Library](https://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/ccd) (<https://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/ccd>) and the [Bodleian Social Science Library](https://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/ssl) (<https://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/ssl>) are the main read-only and lending services respectively, for the material you will require. Reading lists and copies of course PowerPoint slides will be made available to you on Canvas across the academic year. In addition to this, there is a world-renowned collection of Chinese rare books housed in the Bodleian Oriental collections and the superb collections of the Ashmolean Museum.

Supervision

The allocation of graduate supervision for this course is the responsibility of the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies and Oxford School of Global and Area Studies, 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 Asian and Middle Eastern Studies and Oxford School of Global and Area Studies.

Students would normally expect to be allocated their supervisor for their dissertation in Trinity term of their first year. Most students have the opportunity to meet with their supervisor around eight to nine times up until they submit their dissertation early in Trinity term.

Assessment

The Chinese language course is assessed by written and oral examinations.

Assessment for Research Methods (Social Science track) comprises two parts, each weighted equally: a take-home paper in the collection and analysis of qualitative data at the end of Michaelmas Term, and a take-home paper in quantitative analysis at the end of Hilary Term.

Assessment for Modern China Humanities (the humanities Research Methods course) comprises two essays, each weighted equally, with the first essay being submitted at the end of Michaelmas Term and the second at the end of Hilary Term.

The Study of Contemporary China core course is assessed by one unseen exam at the beginning of Hilary Term. Option courses are assessed by either unseen exams or officially submitted essays in Trinity Term.

Finally, students complete a dissertation in their second year which includes the requirement to conduct research using original Chinese language sources.

Course components

Compulsory study

- Chinese Language at level 1 (elementary) or level 2 (intermediate). Candidates will be allocated to these levels by a placement test.
- Compulsory core course on The Study of Contemporary China (SOCC).
- Methodology Training: Candidates can choose between two courses focused on either social sciences or humanities approaches to modern China.

Options

Candidates must choose two option papers, one per year.

Dissertation

Finally, students complete a dissertation in their second year which includes the requirement to conduct research using original Chinese language sources.

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	£24,800
Overseas	£32,020

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

The period between September and December of the second year (covering Michaelmas term) will be spent on full-time language study at Peking University or Taiwan National Normal University (NTNU). You will continue to pay tuition fees to the University of Oxford and college fees to your college in Oxford. The Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies will meet the cost of the fees charged by Peking University or NTNU. The faculty also highlights that students will need to pay for their return airfare from UK to either Taipei or Beijing. Flight prices are changing rapidly, but we advise students to allow £1000-£2000 for this expenditure. Please note that, depending on your choice of thesis 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 to help you cover some of these expenses. Standard travel insurance can be provided by the University. However, students may be required to pay any additional insurance premiums associated with travel to areas with an increased level of risk, and should factor this into their planning for fieldwork.

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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