

Course Information Sheet for entry in 2026-27: MPhil in Theology



Course facts

Mode of study	Full Time Only
Expected length	21 months

About the course

The MPhil in Theology is a full-time, 21 month degree. It offers extensive study of a particular field of theology at an advanced level, with rigorous training in relevant research methods and a period of scholarly research and writing.

Course structure

An overview of the course structure is provided below. Details of the optional elements of the course are provided in the *Course components* section of this page.

Students on the MPhil in Theology work in one of the following fields of study:

- Biblical Studies: Old Testament
- Biblical Studies: New Testament
- Christian Doctrine: History of Doctrine - Patristic Theology
- Christian Doctrine: Modern Theology
- Ecclesiastical History
- Christian Ethics

For more information about the content that is covered in each of the available pathways, see the *Pathway selection* section.

The Faculty of Theology and Religion runs graduate seminars in different subjects, which offer a space for all those doing graduate work to meet and to share aspects of their work with peers. The seminars are an important way of staying in touch with peers and presenting research at various stages of development.

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.

The Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities

The Faculty of Theology and Religion is based in the Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities, a brand-new building at the University of Oxford. It houses seven faculties, two institutes, a new library, a large number of well-equipped teaching and seminar rooms, and performance and arts venues. The faculty has its own centre and social hub within the building which facilitates interdisciplinary and collaborative work. At the heart of the building is a large atrium - called the Great Hall - which is a beautiful space, bringing light into the building, and serving as a space for informal work, relaxation, meeting with friends, taking breaks, having refreshments - and much more.

The library, part of the Bodleian Libraries, houses lending collections for Theology. There are 340 general reader seats, and around 80 graduate study seats - with a further 320 formal and informal study seats throughout the building outside the library.

Open-shelf lending collections are complemented by access to electronic resources, scan on demand, and material requested from the Bodleian's Collections Storage Facility. As well as the Library's extensive staffed hours, there is a 24/7 study space, including smart lockers for self-collect of borrowable items out of hours. Subject support is provided by a team of subject librarians.

Further libraries

The Philosophy and Theology Faculties Library (PTFL) is located in the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter on the same site as the Schwarzman Centre.

The PTFL is a lending library primarily for staff and students of the two faculties, in support of research, teaching and learning. It has a collection of c. 30,000 books for loan on open access, with a further 20,000 available by request from remote store. It is also a delivery location for books from the Bodleian stacks for reference use in the library. Many books are now also available in electronic format; some are downloadable for 24-hour loan.

Languages

The Oxford University Language Centre offers free or discounted courses to members of the University who wish to learn or improve a foreign language relevant to their academic work – or indeed for their general interest and education. If a course is required for study or research, there is a priority enrolment scheme.

Supervision

You will work closely with your supervisor and course coordinator for the specific subject stream of the MPhil in Theology on which you are enrolled. They will provide support, guidance and an overall direction for your studies.

The allocation of graduate supervision for this course is the responsibility of the Faculty of Theology and Religion 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 Theology and Religion. In such circumstances, a second internal supervisor may be appointed.

Assessment

The course is assessed on the basis of four elements, which may include a combination of written examination papers, short essays and/or a long essay. One of the elements is a thesis based on independent scholarly research, which may contribute to a future research degree.

Two units, amounting to 40% of the course, will be assessed in the first year, with the remaining units, including the dissertation, assessed in the second year. The precise units assessed in the first year will be determined by the subject stream the student is studying. The focus of essays and dissertation topics is decided by the student, subject to advice from the supervisor and final approval by the Graduate Studies Committee of the Faculty of Theology and Religion.

There may be an oral examination (*viva voce*) on your dissertation topic and wider knowledge of your field of study.

Pathway selection

You will choose to follow one of six study pathways.

A) Biblical Studies: Old Testament

You will study and be examined on Prescribed Hebrew Texts.

You will also study two of the following subject areas:

- The Literature of the Old Testament and Apocrypha in its Historical Setting
- Old Testament Theology
- the History and Principles of Biblical Study.

B) Biblical Studies: New Testament

You will study and be examined on both of the following topics:

- The Religion and Literature of New Testament: the Four Gospels and Acts in Greek
- The Religion and Literature of the New Testament: The Epistles and Apocalypse in Greek.

You will be required to translate and to comment on matters of literary, historical and theological importance from a selection of these prescribed texts.

You will also study and be examined on one of the following subject areas:

- New Testament Theology
 - Varieties of Judaism, 200 B.C. – C.E. 200
 - the History and Principles of Biblical Study.
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C) Christian Doctrine: Modern Theology

This pathway focusses on Issues in Theology with special reference to Theology from the late 18th century to the present day. You will study and be examined on both of the following topics:

- Methods and Styles in Theology from the late 18th century to the present
- Modern Theology.

You will also study and be examined on a topic or topics falling within Modern Theology.

D) Christian Doctrine: History of Doctrine - Patristic Theology

You will study and be examined on the Development of Christian Doctrine to AD 451. You will develop knowledge of the main lines of development of Christian Doctrine and particular developments in relation to the historical conditions which influenced them.

You will also study and be examined on one of the following subject areas:

- Hellenistic Philosophy and Christian Theology
- Christology of the Patristic Era.

You may choose whether to translate and comment on Greek or on Latin texts. The prescribed texts for both examination papers will be listed in the course regulations for the year in which you commence your course.

You will also study and be examined on a topic or topics falling within the Patristic era.

E) Christian Ethics

This pathway offers a comprehensive grounding in Christian ethics, its basic moral concepts and methodological issues, historical evolution, and its discussion of practical issues in the fields of sexual, medical, economic, and political activity. Those taking the course study one or more select texts in Christian ethics which may include expressions of diverse Christian traditions, the works of major theologians, or texts on a chosen ethical theme.

F) Ecclesiastical History

This pathway provides an intensive training in research in Ecclesiastical History and enables those taking the course to study the development of Church History over the past two millennia, exploring the variety of historiographical approaches to key questions in the history of Christianity.

You will study and be examined on the Nature and Practice of Ecclesiastical History. You will develop knowledge of the nature of ecclesiastical history as a sub-discipline within History through:

- study of the writing of the history of the Church from the Early Church to the modern day; and
- investigation of shifts in historical method, with particular reference to methodological debates within History since the mid-nineteenth century.

You will also study and be examined on a single period and geographical area of Church History selected from the following:

- AD 200-600
- AD 400-1100
- AD 1000-1500
- AD 1400-1800
- AD 1800-present.

You will also study and be examined on a topic or topics in ecclesiastical history, chosen by each candidate in liaison with the supervisor.

Core components

You will submit a dissertation.

Dissertation

You must submit a dissertation of up to 30,000 words. This a core component of the course for all study pathways.

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](http://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/courses/changes-to-courses) (<http://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/courses/changes-to-courses>), and the [provisions of the student contract](http://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/after-you-apply/your-offer-and-contract) (<http://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

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

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 \(//www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/living-costs\)](http://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/living-costs) page of our website.

Document accessibility

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