

Course Information Sheet for entry in 2026-27: MSt in Ancient Philosophy



Course facts

Mode of study	Full Time Only
Expected length	9 months

About the course

The MSt in Ancient Philosophy is a taught course offering advanced study in ancient philosophy through seminars, supervisions, and a thesis, with topics including Plato, Aristotle, Hellenistic thought, and Latin philosophy.

The course aims to provide a foundation on which you can go on to pursue doctoral work in the area. There may be opportunities to study non-Western philosophies alongside traditional ancient Greek and Roman philosophy.

Teaching and learning on the MSt in Ancient Philosophy normally consists of in-person individual supervisions with members of the faculty during term-time, classes and lectures, and ongoing independent research.

Upon completion of the course, you should have:

- pursued a course requiring a high standard in each of the three examined elements (a thesis and two subject options);
- selected at least two areas of ancient philosophy and studied them through individual supervisions with an expert supervisor and either by lectures (offered by an expert or experts in the relevant field) or by classes (convened by an expert or experts in the relevant field) at which students give presentations;
- written a thesis under the guidance of an expert supervisor;
- had the opportunity to attain some knowledge of Ancient Greek, or consolidate and increase existing knowledge;
- had many opportunities to hear and give talks in philosophy, by attending the annual Graduate Philosophy Conference, talks by invited speakers, philosophy societies, and discussion groups; and
- been a member of a college graduate community, associating with graduates from many countries, cultures, and academic disciplines.

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.

During the course, you will take two subject options. You will write a thesis of 10,000 to 15,000 words on a topic you have chosen in consultation with the course coordinator and a prospective supervisor.

It is not a course requirement for students without any (or with little) Ancient Greek to attend the language classes currently run by the Faculty of Classics, but it is highly recommended that they do so, as being able to read philosophical texts in the original language is an advantage for Ancient Philosophy students. Students with intermediate or advanced Greek may choose to attend more advanced Ancient Greek classes.

Each term many graduate classes and research seminars are organised by faculty members in which graduate students are full and important participants.

Moreover, during term-time the Faculty of Philosophy normally offers a weekly workshop that allows members of the faculty and graduate students to discuss work in progress in ancient philosophy by speakers from Oxford and elsewhere. All graduate students specialising in ancient philosophy are encouraged to attend this workshop.

In some years the Faculty of Classics and Faculty of Philosophy jointly offer the Nellie Wallace lectures, which enable scholars from outside the University to visit Oxford in order to lecture and conduct seminars in a subject in the field of *Literae Humaniores*.

You may also decide to attend any graduate or undergraduate classes, seminars and lectures in and outside of the Faculty of Philosophy which are of interest to you, provided those classes, seminars and lectures are open to you.

Graduates are encouraged to organise their own seminars and reading groups, and they also run two societies: one invites distinguished speakers from the UK and around the world, while the other gives graduates the opportunity to present papers to a graduate audience.

Each year there is an Oxford Graduate Philosophy Conference, in which most graduate philosophy students participate in some way.

The course has no fieldwork, industrial placement or year abroad element, but you may decide to attend conferences, workshops or research training elsewhere.

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))

In a typical fortnight during term-time, you can expect to spend around one hour receiving one-to-one supervision, between four and eight hours attending ancient philosophy seminars, and up to six hours of Ancient Greek tuition (voluntary). This translates as around 20–30% of a full-time working week. You can expect to spend the remaining time on self-directed study.

This course is not offered via remote or distance learning.

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 Philosophy will be based in the Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities, a brand-new building at the University of Oxford, which will accommodate seven faculties, two institutes, a new library, a large number of well-equipped teaching and seminar rooms, and performance and arts venues. Each faculty will have its own centre and social hub within a building which will also facilitate interdisciplinary and collaborative work. At the heart of the building will be a large atrium – called the Great Hall – which will be 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, will be open to all students, and will house lending collections for Philosophy. There will be 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 will be 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 will be 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.

Supervision

For this course, the allocation of graduate supervision is the responsibility of the Faculty of Philosophy 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 Philosophy and Faculty of Classics.

Students typically have the opportunity to receive four, one-hour supervision sessions per term with their appointed supervisor for that term.

Before each supervision you will research, write and submit a formative supervision essay on which you receive detailed feedback in the one-to-one supervision session. This should then allow you to further improve your essay for assessment.

Assessment

In addition to writing your thesis, you will be assessed through written work. The first subject option will be assessed by one 5,000-word essay on a topic chosen by you and approved by the course co-ordinator.

Assessment of the second subject option is by two 5,000-word essays on topics linked to the area covered in the two classes you have taken. You may choose to write both essays on topics linked to one class or to write one essay on a topic linked to the first class and the other essay on a topic linked to the second, but overlap in subject material between the essays is to be avoided.

Course components

Options

During the course, you will take two subject options. The first must be chosen from the following list of undergraduate papers in ancient philosophy:

- Plato: Republic
- Plato on Knowledge, Language & Reality in the *Theaetetus* and *Sophist*
- Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics
- Aristotle on Nature, Life and Mind
- Knowledge and Scepticism in Hellenistic Philosophy
- Latin philosophy.

Tuition for these subjects is offered in the form of supervisions, as well as lectures and classes.

The second subject option consists of two classes, which change every year, and you must attend both classes. In the last four years, the following classes have been on offer, which give an idea of the sort of subjects that have been tackled:

- Plato on Education
- Happiness and Time in Ancient Philosophy
- Seneca's Moral Letters
- Aristotle's Defence of Natural Slavery and its Legacy
- *Techne* in Ancient Philosophy
- Vice in Ancient Philosophy
- Virtue and Eros in Stoic Philosophy
- The Ontology of Action: Aristotle and After
- The Stoics on Emotions
- Plato and Aristotle on Truth
- Prudence in Aristotle's Ethics
- Sophistry and Fallacy in Plato and Aristotle
- Plato's Political Philosophy

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	£18,970
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 your course requirements, you may need to choose a dissertation, a project or a thesis topic. Please note that, depending on your choice of 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 to help you cover some of these expenses. The Philosophy Graduate Studies Committee has a research and travel fund for graduate students to which students may apply for assistance with, for example, the costs of attending conferences or workshops. BPhil and MSt students may only apply for funding if they are presenting a paper.

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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