

Course Information Sheet for entry in 2026-27: MSt in English (650-1550)



Course facts

Mode of study	Full Time Only
Expected length	9 months

About the course

The MSt in English (650–1550) is a taught course offering training in medieval literature, languages, and manuscript studies, with core seminars, optional papers, and a dissertation supporting advanced research or doctoral preparation.

The MSt in English Language and Literature 650–1550 offers the knowledge and understanding, research materials and opportunities, and the skills and techniques, for undertaking the study of the languages and literatures produced in England, Scotland and Wales before 1550.

The course aims to broaden students' experience of the literature produced in the British Isles and related areas across nearly a millennium. It also offers unrivalled training in the core skills for research in medieval studies. This includes:

- reading, understanding and editing medieval manuscripts and early printed books;
- developing skills in languages such as Old English and Old Norse; and
- debating a wide range of approaches and methods in the study of medieval literature and culture.

Optional courses with leading scholars help to focus students' interests, and a dissertation provides the chance to pursue in-depth research to a high quality.

The range of the literature and approaches likely to be encountered is challenging and rewarding. There is no one method or theoretical approach; the course gives you time to learn which sort of medieval studies you wish to practise, or invent. Whatever your past experience and expected career path, the course can help you to become an accomplished medievalist with a wide range of expertise.

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 course consists of four main components spread over three academic terms, through which you have the opportunity to pursue interests within your chosen MSt course, as well as across period boundaries.

In the first two terms, you will take a core course (A) and a course in book history and theories of text (B), both tailored to your MSt. There is no formal assessment for the A Course, but written work and/or oral presentations may be required.

You will also choose two courses from a wide range of options (C). One is taken in the first term and one in the second term. The courses are taught in weekly, small group seminars. You are not constrained to follow option courses in the designated period and, indeed, option courses often traverse the boundaries of the broad periods and subject groups.

Under the guidance of a specialist supervisor you will also research and write a dissertation, which is submitted in the final term. You will be assigned to a member of academic staff who will act as your supervisor. Students will have the opportunity to present their dissertation ideas at a one-day conference that they organise, usually at the start of Trinity term.

You will also have the opportunity to hear lectures and papers by leading writers, critics, and theorists from inside and outside the University. You are encouraged to participate in the many research seminars and reading groups that run throughout term time, many of which are coordinated by graduates themselves. There is an active and lively graduate organisation funded by the faculty, English Graduates at Oxford (EGO), that organises study skills, training and career development seminars, as well as social events and conferences.

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 English Language and Literature will be based in the Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities, a brand-new building at the University of Oxford due to open in 2025, 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. The faculty will have its own centre and social hub within the 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 house lending collections for English. 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

Dissertation supervision is normally six supervision sessions, not exceeding six hours in total. This is indicative of typical supervision and not a guarantee.

You should note that it is your responsibility to attend and take advantage of the support provided during supervisions, and take into consideration your supervisor's workload when considering a termly schedule (supervisors will generally not be able to hold meetings and read work at short notice).

The allocation of graduate supervision for this course is the responsibility of the Faculty of English 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 English.

Assessment

The MSt is assessed via the submission of four pieces of coursework. In addition to the dissertation, you will submit three essays – one at the end of the first term, and two at the end of the second term – relating to the 'B' and 'C' courses that have been taken. The 'B' and 'C' coursework will be completed by the end of the second term (Hilary term), leaving the summer term (Trinity term) to complete the dissertation, which is submitted in June. The outcomes of the MSt examination are pass, fail, merit, or distinction. Candidates must achieve a pass mark on each element of the examination to be awarded the MSt.

You will also sit a short transcription test, assessed on a pass/fail basis.

Course components

Compulsory study

A. Core course: Literature, Contexts and Approaches

This is a core course and is compulsory for all students. The A course for this strand runs over the first two terms. Classes on literature, contexts and approaches introduce representative key texts and current debates on the literature and cultural history of the period.

B. Core course: Bibliography, Theories of Text, History of the Book, Manuscript Studies

This is a compulsory, assessed course, taught via a range of lectures and seminars in the first two terms. It introduces students to the methodology and theory of bibliography, manuscript studies, textual scholarship and book history.

Dissertation

You will write a dissertation on a subject of your choice, but related to the work you have been doing over the year. You will be assigned to a member of academic staff who will act as your supervisor.

Options

You will choose two courses from a range of options (C). Options change from year to year, depending on the availability of faculty members and on their current teaching and research interests. Recent C course options for this course have included:

- Old English poetry: Cynewulf and the Cynewulf canon;
- Old Norse Literature;
- After the Conquest: Reinventing fiction and history;
- Contemplative Worlds, 700-1450;
- Wycliffite and Related Literatures; and
- Andrewes and Donne: Performing Religious Discourse.

You are not constrained to follow option courses in the designated period and, indeed, option courses often traverse the boundaries of the broad periods and subject groups.

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

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