

Course Information Sheet for entry in 2026-27: MSt in Historical Studies



Course facts

Mode of study	Part Time Only
Expected length	12 months

About the course

The MSt in Historical Studies is the second year of a two-year part-time graduate course that focuses on British, Western European and imperial history and promotes a broad approach to historical research across the historical disciplines.

The course forms part of Oxford University Department for Continuing Education's graduate programme in historical studies. Successful completion of the PGCert in Historical Studies is mandatory for admission to this master's year.

The MSt course builds upon the skills and knowledge developed in the PGCert and encourages students to engage actively with theoretical and historiographical approaches underpinning modern historical research. You will receive systematic training in research methods and the opportunity to research a substantial dissertation.

Course structure

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

There are three units that are taught in three weekend residences providing 38 hours of teaching, seminar discussion and presentations. Most students also have the opportunity to receive up to five hours individual supervision for their dissertations. You will be expected to spend at least fifteen hours per week in private study preparing for the weekend residences and researching and writing your dissertation.

You will also have access to the extensive range of seminars, lectures and training sessions offered by this department and other departments, faculties and centres within the University. The Humanities Division and History Faculty offer a wide range of graduate seminars, lectures and training and special events.

Attendance

This course is part-time. You will be expected to attend three weekend residences in Oxford, in October, December, and January and a further dissertation workshop in April.

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 [Rewley House Continuing Education Library](https://www.conted.ox.ac.uk/about/library-facilities) (<https://www.conted.ox.ac.uk/about/library-facilities>), one of the Bodleian Libraries, is situated in Rewley House. The department aims to support the wide variety of subjects covered by departmental courses at many academic levels. The department also has a collection of around 73,000 books together with periodicals. PCs in the library give access to the internet and the full range of electronic resources subscribed to by the University of Oxford. The Jessop Reading Room adjoining the library is available for study.

The department provides various [IT facilities](https://www.conted.ox.ac.uk/about/online-support) (<https://www.conted.ox.ac.uk/about/online-support>), including the Student Computing Facility which provides individual PCs for your use.

In addition to Rewley House's well-stocked Continuing Education Library, you will have access to University libraries such as the Bodleian Library, Weston Library, History Faculty Library, and the Bodleian Art, Archaeology and Ancient World Library. Library access includes full online access to history and other journals and to a wide range of historical data bases and document collections, available anywhere.

Supervision

The allocation of graduate supervision for this course is the responsibility of the Department for Continuing Education and this role will usually be performed by the Course Director.

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 Department for Continuing Education.

Assessment

The graded assessment for these units is provided by the dissertation, supplemented by three summative assessment exercises marked pass/fail, namely a survey of secondary literature for the dissertation, a survey of primary sources for the dissertation and a dissertation proposal.

The final grade awarded for the MSt subsumes the grade awarded for the Postgraduate Certificate in Historical Studies, with a weighting of 60% applied to the MSt grade and 40% to the PGCert grade.

Course components

Compulsory study

Unit 1: Using Archives and Analysing Sources

In this unit you will examine the key documentary and material sources and resources for your specialist period selected from three parallel strands covering the medieval, early modern and modern periods. You will be encouraged to sharpen your critical and analytical skills and to reflect upon the challenges and opportunities particular sources or categories of source present to users. You will be introduced to the main historical methods informing the design of research projects, for example macro and micro approaches, quantification and the use of material evidence. Training is also offered in the use of electronic search engines, catalogues and databases and guidance provided on using archives and their catalogues.

Unit 2: Theoretical Approaches to History

You will examine themes and theoretical approaches that have provided the critical framework for, or have influenced, approaches to historical research. Four seminars are offered each year. In the first instance, these will cover gender, space, violence and identity. There is assigned reading but you will also be encouraged to consider the application of the chosen approaches to your own research and to subjects that interest you. You will be required to give short presentations, for example, introducing key texts.

Unit 3: Writing History

You will be encouraged in this unit to reflect upon the challenges historians face in framing, structuring and presenting their research findings. A visiting lecturer and members of the course team will share their experience of planning and writing books and handling conceptual issues such as causation, problem solving and controversy and the challenges of presenting qualitative and quantitative research findings and using digital data. You will give a short presentation on your dissertation and take questions and comments from tutors and students. There is a workshop on the organisation and presentation of the dissertation.

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	£7,900
Overseas	£15,190

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

Please note that this course requires that you attend in Oxford for residential sessions, and you may incur additional travel and accommodation expenses for this. Accommodation costs in Oxford can start at around £98 per night in a department/college or around £120 in a hotel (single rate). Students should also factor in costs for meals during their stay. In addition, as part of your course requirements, you will need to choose a dissertation topic. This element of the course is mandatory and forms part of the assessment for the course. Depending on your choice of topic and the research required to complete it, you may incur additional expenses, such as travel expenses, research expenses, equipment, and materials. You will need to meet these additional costs yourself. There are no other compulsory elements of this course that entail additional costs beyond fees and living 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 part-time study

Your living costs may vary depending on your personal circumstances but you will still need to cover your cost of living on a full-time basis for the duration of your course, even if you will not be based in Oxford throughout your studies. While the range of likely living costs for a single, full-time student living in Oxford in the 2026-27 academic year is between £1,405 and £2,105 per month, living costs outside Oxford may be different.

Part-time students who are not based in Oxford will need to calculate travel and accommodation costs carefully. Depending on your circumstances and study plans, this may include the [cost of a visitor visa to attend for short blocks of time \(//www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/living-costs\)](https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/living-costs) (if [visitor visa eligibility criteria \(//www.ox.ac.uk/students/visa/before/visitors\)](https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/visa/before/visitors) 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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