

Course Information Sheet for entry in 2026-27: MSt in Islamic Studies and History



Course facts

Mode of study	Full Time Only
Expected length	9 months

About the course

The MSt in Islamic Studies and History is a taught course focused on pre-modern Islamic history and thought, requiring prior knowledge and language skills, with primary source research, two electives, and a dissertation or essays.

The course focuses on the political, social, and intellectual history of the central Islamic lands (Egypt, the Fertile Crescent, the Arabian Peninsula, Iran, Central Asia and Anatolia) up until c. 1800.

The course is characterised by a strong emphasis on research based on primary sources, thus making it a very good entry gate for subsequent doctoral study. You will already possess substantial general knowledge of Islamic or Middle Eastern studies and history.

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.

You can take specialised classes and undertake independent research under the supervision of a faculty member. You will receive specialised teaching in two elective papers, taught during the first two terms, while also working on a dissertation (or on two extended research essays) under the supervision of a suitable member of the faculty.

An induction meeting is normally scheduled for new students during the week before the beginning of full term which is known as noughth week.

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.

You will have access to the Nizami Ganjavi Library part of the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies. The library, comprising approximately 80,000 volumes of books, periodicals and pamphlets, housed both on and off-site, supports students of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, Hebrew and Jewish Studies, Eastern Christianity, South and Inner Asian Studies and Korean. The library's Middle Eastern and Islamic collections have a strong focus on language, literature, and pre-1800 history, religion, philosophy and culture which is complemented by the modern Middle East collections of St Antony's Middle East Centre Library. The Nizami Ganjavi Library provides access to publications in both Middle Eastern languages (ie Arabic, Persian, Turkish and others) as well as European languages.

Adjacent to the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies is the Ashmolean Museum, which houses superb collections.

You will have access to the faculty's IT Officer, and other bibliographic, archival or material sources as appropriate to your course. There is a computing room for the use of graduate students in the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies as well as a common room where tea and coffee are available and staff and students can meet.

Supervision

The allocation of graduate supervision for this course is the responsibility of the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern 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.

You will be assigned a supervisor who is responsible for offering academic guidance throughout the course.

Assessment

Your final examination will consist of four units, which carry the same weight: two elective papers (often examined as one-week take-home essays); an essay on methods and research materials related to at least one of the options chosen by a candidate (examined during Hilary term); and a thesis, or two essays, on a topic (or topics) selected in consultation with your supervisor and approved by the Faculty Board.

Further information on the course, and the examination process, can be found in the course handbook via the course webpage on the faculty's website.

Course components

Compulsory study

Alongside your elective papers you will work on a dissertation (or on two extended research essays) and submit an essay on methods and research materials related to one of your elective papers.

Options

You will take two elective papers during the first two terms. Available elective papers may vary from year to year, but topics that are frequently taught include:

- The Qur'an and Qur'anic exegesis;
- Hadith;
- Islamic law;
- Sufism;
- Islamic theology and philosophy;
- Medieval Middle Eastern and Islamic history;
- Islamic art and architecture;
- Arabic literature;
- Persian literature.

Elective papers normally involve a weekly meeting of two hours and typically include a close reading of primary sources, informal lecturing, and the discussion of secondary literature and student essays. You will spend a significant amount of time preparing for these meetings by working through primary texts, reading secondary literature, and writing essays.

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	£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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