

Course Information Sheet for entry in 2026-27: MSc in Public Policy Research



Course facts

Mode of study	Full Time Only
Expected length	12 months

About the course

The MSc in Public Policy Research is a one-year taught degree course that offers an outstanding education on how to conduct robust, applied and impactful research that informs and influences public policy.

The MSc will give you a keen understanding of the relationship between research evidence and other major influences on the public policy process, such as ideologies and institutions; it is anticipated that you will be able to design and undertake a range of policy-relevant research methods to the highest standards and skilled in effectively communicating research findings to a wide range of audiences including policymakers and the general public.

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 curriculum for the course is delivered in-person. Teaching styles vary and include lectures, seminars, tutorials, student presentations, or workshops across three terms.

Please note that the curriculum may vary from year to year.

In the first two terms, you will take foundational modules to enable you to learn how concepts and theories help researchers to identify and define public policy problems. You will also take courses in Research Design and Methods.

You will begin working on your thesis, initially focusing on the development of a research proposal, on an applied public policy problem.

In the third term, you will take an option module that enables you to explore in depth a particular public policy topic of your choice.

Finally, you will write a thesis and produce an accompanying research brief that distils insights from the research for decision-makers in government.

As the Blavatnik School of Government is committed to research with impact and is home to researchers engaging in profoundly independent and academically vigorous research relevant to the world's most pressing policy issues, you will learn from and work with world-class researchers, through those modules, to generate applied research questions and hypotheses that can be tested empirically to tackle real-world problems and communicate robust research and data that informs policy designs and implementation.

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.

There are study spaces available in the Blavatnik School building, some of which can be pre-booked.

Students also have access to the student common room, in addition to the communal facilities such as the café and the Inamori Forum. The school runs an extensive range of events and brings public policy leaders to the school to inspire and mentor students.

The Blavatnik School does not have its own library because most reading material is made available electronically. However, you will have access to the [Social Science Library \(http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/ssl\)](http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/ssl) in addition to other University libraries and centrally-provided electronic resources.

The Blavatnik School benefits from its own ICT team, which provides support and advice to students. Students are expected to bring their own laptop.

Supervision

The allocation of graduate supervision for this course is the responsibility of the Blavatnik School of Government and it is not always possible to accommodate the preferences of incoming students to work with a particular member of staff. The supervisor will normally be a member of the Blavatnik School of Government's faculty, but may be from one of Oxford's other departments.

You will meet with your academic supervisor to discuss the progress of your studies; they will help you to identify your research topic, devise an important and researchable question, formulate and execute an appropriate research design, and produce a methodologically sound and impactful thesis. The Blavatnik School of Government will assign supervisors at the start of the year on the basis of the intellectual and policy interests expressed by students.

In addition to the academic supervisor, you will benefit from advice on the development of your thesis provided by an experienced policy advisor with substantive practical expertise in the area of your research discipline.

Assessment

You will undertake a mixture of types of summative assessment (eg essay, policy memo, short research proposal, practical data exercise), reflecting the breadth of the material being taught and the skillset required of public policy research professionals. You will also complete formative work to provide practice opportunities for each type of summative assessment, and to build a repertoire of practical research skills that will assist with completing your thesis and prove attractive to future employers. The scheduling of summative assignments has been designed to be stretching but realistic for students, to spread the workload across the year, and to support progression of the thesis, from conception through to analysis and write-up.

Course components

The MSc consists of compulsory modules and specialist optional modules chosen from a wide range of topics. Students will also conduct research for a 10,000-word thesis and an accompanying research brief.

Compulsory study

The current curriculum includes the following compulsory components:

- Theories and Approaches in Public Policy Research
- Research Design and Qualitative Methods for Public Policy Research
- Statistics for Public Policy
- Research in a Public Policy Context
- Option Module
- Thesis development seminars

Options

You can personalise your learning to meet your professional needs, through your Option modules choices. In addition, all candidates are invited to attend the Professional Skills Programme sessions.

The Option modules enable you to explore in depth a particular public policy topic of your choice. The options cover a range of contemporary policy issues, and will vary from year to year. Previous years have seen modules on climate change, cybersecurity, economic development, Africa, big data, the challenges of democratisation, education policy, governing in a digital age, international economic relations of governments, international migration, legal and illegal politics, police and policing, political communication, social policy, sustainable nutrition, urban challenges in developing countries, and taxing business, etc.

The Professional Skills Programme offers a range of sessions designed to help you acquire, develop and enhance practical and transferable skills necessary for a successful career in public policy.

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

Fee status	Annual Course fees
Home	£41,380
Overseas	£41,380

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).

Deposits

If your application is successful, you will be asked to pay a deposit against your course fees at the application stage as a condition of your offer. The deposit amount and date by which payment must be made are shown below.

Amount of deposit	Date by which deposit must be paid
£6,200	26 May 2026

The department's website provides [further information about deposits for this course \(https://www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/msc-fees-and-funding\)](https://www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/msc-fees-and-funding).

Additional costs

In addition, as part of your course requirements, you will need to choose a thesis 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, materials and field trips. These costs will vary according to the location and length of the fieldwork and the department estimates that these costs may range from £500 to £3,000 or more. 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 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](https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/living-costs) and/or [living costs for family members or other dependants](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](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](https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/living-costs) page of our website.

Document accessibility

If you require a more accessible version of this document please [contact Graduate Admissions and Recruitment by email](mailto:graduate.admissions@admin.ox.ac.uk).