

Course Information Sheet for entry in 2026-27: MSt in Theology



Course facts

Mode of study	Full Time Only
Expected length	9 months

About the course

The Master of Studies (MSt) in Theology is a full-time, taught course offering an intensive period of advanced study in a chosen field, with rigorous training in relevant research methods.

It offers the opportunity to gain specialist knowledge of distinct topics within the chosen field of study and includes an element of scholarly research and writing which can constitute part of the training for a future research degree. You will be part of an active and vibrant community of graduate students within the Faculty of Theology and Religion.

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 will choose to work in one of the following fields of study:

- Biblical Studies: Old Testament
- Biblical Studies: New Testament
- Biblical Studies: Bible Interpretation
- Christian Doctrine: History of Doctrine - Patristic Theology
- Christian Doctrine: Modern Theology
- Ecclesiastical History
- Christian Ethics
- Science and Religion.

For more information about the content that is covered in each of the available pathways, see the *Pathway selection* section.

The course is taught through a combination of core classes or tutorials and meetings with your supervisor, either one-to-one or in a very small group. Attendance at other lectures and seminars may be recommended or required. The topics being studied will normally be covered during the first two terms.

You learn to analyse and evaluate both primary and secondary literature, how to select the most significant materials, and combine them to form a structured argument. You also develop the habits of critical questioning, clear exposition, and objective evaluation.

The number of students studying on each pathway varies between individual disciplines but is usually small, allowing teaching to be tailored to the needs and interests of each student.

Students are encouraged to attend and participate in research seminars in their subject area. There are research seminar series in:

- the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible
- New Testament
- Patristics
- Modern Theology
- Church History
- Christian Ethics
- Science and Religion.

Other research seminars of interest are hosted by other faculties and seminars, colloquia, and conferences are organised by the interdisciplinary research centres affiliated to the faculty.

The choice of essays and dissertation topics is decided by you, subject to advice from your supervisor, and final approval from the Graduate Studies Committee at the Faculty of Theology and Religion. For those who intend to proceed to the DPhil, the topic of the dissertation normally provides a foundation for doctoral research.

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 Theology and Religion is based in the Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities, a brand-new building at the University of Oxford. It houses seven faculties, two institutes, a new library, a large number of well-equipped teaching and seminar rooms, and performance and arts venues. The faculty has its own centre and social hub within the building which facilitates interdisciplinary and collaborative work. At the heart of the building is a large atrium - called the Great Hall - which is 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, houses lending collections for Theology. There are 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 are 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 is 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.

Further libraries

The Philosophy and Theology Faculties Library (PTFL) is located in the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter on the same site as the Schwarzman Centre.

The PTFL is a lending library primarily for staff and students of the two faculties, in support of research, teaching and learning. It has a collection of c. 30,000 books for loan on open access, with a further 20,000 available by request from remote store. It is also a delivery location for books from the Bodleian stacks for reference use in the library. Many books are now also available in electronic format; some are downloadable for 24-hour loan.

Languages

The Oxford University Language Centre offers free or discounted courses to members of the University who wish to learn or improve a foreign language relevant to their academic work – or indeed for their general interest and education. If a course is required for study or research, there is a priority enrolment scheme.

Supervision

You work closely with your supervisor and course coordinator for the specific subject stream of the MSt in Theology on which you are enrolled. They provide support, guidance, and overall direction for your studies.

The allocation of graduate supervision for this course is the responsibility of the Faculty of Theology and Religion 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 Theology and Religion. In such circumstances, a second internal supervisor may be appointed.

Assessment

The MSt degree is awarded on the basis of two short essays, a written examination, and a dissertation in Trinity term. These assessments may require a demonstration of linguistic competence according to your field of study. There may be an oral examination (*viva voce*) on your dissertation topic and wider knowledge of your field of study.

Pathway selection

You will choose to follow one of eight study pathways.

A) Biblical Studies: Old Testament

This pathway offers an intensive training in Old Testament studies and Biblical Hebrew. Students develop a comprehensive understanding of the genesis and contents of the Old Testament, conduct in-depth research of several topics within Old Testament studies, selected in close consultation with your supervisor, and develop a high level of competence in Biblical Hebrew through the close study of selected Hebrew texts. Areas chosen by students in recent years include the following:

- Poetry and Prayer
 - Law and Ritual
 - Prophecy and Apocalyptic Literature
 - Historiography
 - Wisdom Literature
 - Early biblical interpretation
 - Dead Sea Scrolls
 - Text Criticism.
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B) Biblical Studies: New Testament

This pathway offers an intensive training in New Testament studies and New Testament Greek. It is expected that those taking the pathway:

- will develop a comprehensive understanding of the genesis and contents of the New Testament;
 - conduct in-depth research of several topics within New Testament studies; and
 - develop a high level of competence in New Testament Greek through the close study of prescribed texts in New Testament Greek.
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C) Biblical Studies: Biblical Interpretation

This pathway offers an intensive training in research in the history of biblical interpretation, biblical hermeneutics, reception history and related studies.

D) Science and Religion

This pathway provides the opportunity to deal with leading themes in the historical development of the relation of science and religion, the theological and philosophical questions that arise within the field, and major contemporary debates about God, science, and faith. Topics discussed include the Darwinian debates and their contemporary religious relevance; contemporary cosmology and doctrines of creation; issues in the scientific study of religion; natural theology; theology and the philosophy of science; and the origins and development of scientific atheism.

E) Christian Doctrine: Modern Theology

This pathway offers an intensive training in research, and study of topics, in Modern Theology. The degree offers the opportunity to study a range of methods and styles in western theology from the late 18th century to the present. In recent years, featured theologians have included Schleiermacher, Kierkegaard, Newman, Barth and von Balthasar.

F) Christian Doctrine: History of Doctrine - Patristic Theology (c. AD 100-787)

This pathway offers an intensive training in research, and study of topics, in Patristic Theology including the study of prescribed texts from the Patristics period in Greek or Latin.

G) Christian Ethics

This pathway offers a comprehensive grounding in Christian ethics, its basic moral concepts and methodological issues, historical evolution, and its discussion of practical issues in the fields of sexual, medical, economic, and political activity. Those taking the pathway study one or more select texts in Christian ethics which may include expressions of diverse Christian traditions, the works of major theologians, or texts on a chosen ethical theme.

H) Ecclesiastical History

This pathway provides an intensive training in research in Ecclesiastical History and enables those taking the pathway to study the development of Church History over the past two millennia, exploring the variety of historiographical approaches to key questions in the history of Christianity. You will focus on a single period and geographical area of Church History selected from the following:

- AD 200-600
- AD 400-1100
- AD 1000-1500
- AD 1400-1800
- AD 1800-present.

Core components

You will submit a dissertation.

Dissertation

You must submit a dissertation of not more than 15,000 words. This is a core component of the course for all study pathways.

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 \(//www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/living-costs\)](http://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/living-costs) page of our website.

Document accessibility

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