

Course Information Sheet for entry in 2025-26: DPhil in Area Studies (Middle East)



Course facts

Mode of study	Full Time	Part Time
Expected length	3 to 4 years	6 to 8 years

About the course

The DPhil in Area Studies offers the opportunity to undertake a doctoral project dedicated to the study of a specific country or region, or else to compare more than one region, using social science approaches whilst also generating theories and propositions that are of value across regions.

Looking beyond the big picture of globalisation and development, researchers at the Oxford School of Global and Area Studies (OSGA) examine the interplay between the local, the national, the regional, and the global to offer a better understanding of the contemporary world. Oxford's Area Studies department is consistently ranked amongst the top echelon and has been recently ranked by QS University Rankings as first in the world.

As a DPhil student, you will have access to outstanding research projects, seminar series, workshops and conferences and will have the chance to develop your work alongside academic staff who are experts in their fields. You will apply for admission to one of seven streams, which each have a distinct country or region of focus. This page describes the Middle East stream of the course.

As a student of the Middle East stream of this course, your research will usually be undertaken in collaboration with the school's Middle East Studies Programme. Research by the programme covers topics as diverse as History, Politics, Literature, and Social Anthropology.

Recent doctoral research projects undertaken by students undertaking the Middle East stream include:

- International Relations of the Middle East
- Religion in the Middle East

During the first year of the course you will focus on developing your research questions, conceptual framework and methodological approaches for your thesis. You will also participate in the first-year DPhil seminar series and you will have the opportunity to attend other courses offered by the school as identified in your Training Needs Analysis. Your Training Needs Analysis will be discussed with your supervisor and reviewed on a regular basis.

In your second year you will continue to implement your research plan through theoretical engagement and/or fieldwork, data collection and analysis. If you intend to undertake fieldwork as part of your research, you will be expected to attend a fieldwork safety course available through the Social Sciences Division.

Your third year requires you to participate in at least one conference, in the UK or internationally, presenting your work to a non-specialist audience, and to submit materials for Confirmation of Status as a doctoral researcher, as well as working towards the completion of your thesis.

The course aims to empower you to achieve the following learning outcomes:

- develop research skills in ways that are relevant to the study of areas and regions;
- build an interdisciplinary and/or comparative understanding of different regions;
- undertake original research which makes a significant contribution to the literature;
- communicate research to non-academic audiences in ways that ensure real-world impact; and
- present a lucid and scholarly thesis for examination.

Attendance

The course can be studied full-time or part-time with both modes requiring attendance in Oxford. Full-time students are subject to the University's Residence requirements. Part-time students are required to attend course-related activities in Oxford for a minimum of 30 days each year.

Resources to support your study

As a graduate student, you will have access to the University's wide range of world-class 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.

The Bodleian Social Science Library (SSL) is the main library for Area Studies. The SSL is housed on the ground floor of the Manor Road Building, and is open seven days a week during term-time. The library offers a variety of study spaces including graduate study rooms, individual study carrels, and group discussion rooms. The Social Sciences Library is complemented by the resources of the Bodleian library.

There is a room at the Oxford School of Global and Area Studies which is available to students for study purposes.

Supervision

For this course, the allocation of graduate supervision is the responsibility of the Oxford School of Global and Area 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 Oxford School of Global and Area Studies.

You will be assigned one or two supervisors, depending on your thesis subject.

These supervisors will advise and guide you as you progress through the different stages of your research. Most students have the opportunity to meet with their supervisor on average two to three times per term. Ongoing support will be provided by your supervisor(s) during your studies and feedback will be received from peers and faculty members at the first-year DPhil seminars. Written feedback will be provided as part of the Transfer and Confirmation of Status procedures and after the final viva voce.

Assessment

Candidates for the DPhil are normally admitted with Probationer Research Student (PRS) status. As a PRS, you will develop your research proposal and skills, and produce a draft section or sections of your thesis, in order to apply for the Transfer of Status that will end your probationary period as a research student and give you full DPhil status.

Applications for Transfer of Status must be submitted within a maximum of four terms from admissions as a PRS (8 terms for part-time students). Once you have been admitted to full DPhil status, you will also be expected to apply for and gain confirmation of DPhil status, normally within nine terms of admission (18 terms for part-time students), to show that your work continues to be on track.

Both milestones normally involve an interview with two assessors (other than your supervisor) and therefore provide important experience for the final oral examination.

Students will be expected to submit their thesis three to four years after the date of admission (6-8 years for part-time students).

After submitting your finished thesis, you will be required to attend a viva voce (viva for short). The viva will be held by two examiners, one internal to the University and one external. The purpose of this is to enable the examiners to assure themselves that the thesis is your own work, to provide you with an opportunity to defend your thesis and to offer any necessary clarifications. A final copy of the thesis, incorporating any corrections, will be submitted after the viva.

Changes to this course

The University will seek to deliver this course in accordance with the description set out above. 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 you commence your course. These might include significant changes made necessary by any pandemic, epidemic or local health emergency. For further information, please see the University's Terms and Conditions (<http://www.graduate.ox.ac.uk/terms>) and our page on changes to courses (<http://www.graduate.ox.ac.uk/coursechanges>).

Costs

Annual fees for entry in 2025-26

Full-time study

Fee status	Annual Course fees
Home	£21,320
Overseas	£31,090

Part-time study

Fee status	Annual Course fees
Home	£10,660
Overseas	£15,545

Information about 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, please be aware that fees will usually increase annually. Information about how much fees and other costs may increase is set out in the University's Terms and Conditions (<http://www.graduate.ox.ac.uk/terms>).

Course fees cover your teaching as well as other academic services and facilities provided to support your studies. Unless specified in the additional cost information (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 cost information.

Graduate students who have reached the end of their standard period of fee liability may be required to pay a termly University and/or a college continuation charge.

The University continuation charge, per term for entry in 2025-26 is £672, please be aware that this will increase annually. For part-time students, the termly charge will be half of the termly rate payable by full-time students.

If a college continuation charge applies (not applicable for non-matriculated courses) it is likely to be in the region of £100 to £600. Please contact your college for more details, including information about whether your college's continuation charge is applied at a different rate for part-time study.

Additional cost information

Full-time study

There are no compulsory elements of this course that entail additional costs beyond fees (or, after fee liability ends, continuation charges) and living costs. However, please note that, depending on your choice of research topic and the research required to complete it, you may incur additional expenses, such as travel expenses, research expenses, and field trips. You will need to meet these additional costs, although you may be able to apply for small grants from your department and/or college to help you cover some of these expenses. Standard travel insurance can be provided by the University. However, students may be required to pay any additional insurance premiums associated with travel to areas with an increased level of risk and/or for travel of more than 12 months duration, and should factor this into their planning for fieldwork.

Part-time study

Please note that you are required to attend in Oxford for a minimum of 30 days each year, and you may incur additional travel and accommodation expenses for this. Also, depending on your choice of research topic and the research required to complete it, you may incur further additional expenses, such as travel expenses, research expenses, and field trips. You will need to meet these additional costs, although you may be able to apply for small grants from your department and/or college to help you cover some of these expenses. Standard travel insurance can be provided by the University. However, students may be required to pay any additional insurance premiums associated with travel to areas with an increased level of risk and/or for travel of more than 12 months duration, and should factor this into their planning for fieldwork.

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.

If you are studying part-time your living costs may vary depending on your personal circumstances but you must still ensure that you will have sufficient funding to meet these costs for the duration of your course.

The likely living costs for the 2025-26 academic year are published below. These costs are based on a single, full-time graduate student, with no dependants, living in Oxford. We provide the cost per month so you can multiply up by the number of months you expect to live in Oxford.

Likely living costs for one month

	Lower range	Upper range
Food	£330	£515
Accommodation	£790	£955
Personal items	£200	£335
Social activities	£45	£100
Study costs	£40	£90
Other	£20	£40
Total	£1,425	£2,035

Likely living costs for nine months

	Lower range	Upper range
Food	£2,970	£4,635
Accommodation	£7,110	£8,595
Personal items	£1,800	£3,015
Social activities	£405	£900
Study costs	£360	£810
Other	£180	£360
Total	£12,825	£18,315

Likely living costs for twelve months

	Lower range	Upper range
Food	£3,960	£6,180
Accommodation	£9,480	£11,460
Personal items	£2,400	£4,020
Social activities	£540	£1,200
Study costs	£480	£1,080
Other	£240	£480
Total	£17,100	£24,420

When planning your finances for any future years of study at Oxford beyond the 2025-26 academic year, it is suggested that you allow for potential increases in living expenses of 4% each year – although this rate may vary depending on the national economic situation.

More information about how these figures have been calculated is available at www.graduate.ox.ac.uk/livingcosts.

Document accessibility

If you require a more accessible version of this document please contact Graduate Admissions and Recruitment by email (graduate.admissions@admin.ox.ac.uk) or via the online form (<http://www.graduate.ox.ac.uk/ask/form>).