

Course Information Sheet for entry in 2025-26: DPhil in Social Data Science



Course facts

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

About the course

The DPhil in Social Data Science is an advanced research degree which provides the opportunity to investigate and address novel research questions at the intersection of the computational and social sciences, supported by the multidisciplinary faculty at the Oxford Internet Institute (OII), Mathematics, Computer Science, Engineering, Statistics, and other departments across the University of Oxford.

The DPhil in Social Data Science (known as a PhD at other universities) will introduce you to cutting-edge research whilst studying in a beautiful, historic setting that is both student- and family-friendly. During your study at Oxford, you are encouraged to pioneer new approaches to contemporary social and policy issues online, developing new computational and data-driven methodology to inform the development and governance of technology. As a student, you will be part of a diverse cohort of research students, of many nationalities and from a wide range of scientific backgrounds. Research students in Social Data Science are graduates in subjects from computer science and mathematics to physics, as well as transdisciplinary subjects such as human-centred data science and complex systems.

The course combines individual supervision with a selection of lectures, seminars, transferrable skills training, and opportunities to participate in leading-edge research activities. OII faculty are world class experts working in the cutting-edge of their fields, and this innovative research is fully reflected in their course teaching. You will also be able to attend optional courses led by faculty at the OII, as well as courses in other departments.

The programme provides a strong computational foundation, training you to develop new research skills in areas such as machine learning, statistical modelling, large-scale data collection, algorithm auditing, or network science. The DPhil in Social Data Science provides you with a rare grounding in both technical skills and social science research, helping you build critical skills to study digital technologies. There are weekly opportunities for you to interact with DPhil in Information, Communication and the Social Sciences students, providing a rich multidisciplinary environment.

In addition to the formal requirements of the DPhil thesis, all OII doctoral students have access to regular training in the key professional skills necessary to support their research and future employment. These range from classes on advanced research methods as part of the OII's option course offerings, to professional development training (provided both by the department and the University) such as presentation skills, academic writing and navigating the process of peer review.

You will attend a weekly seminar in which you will present your own work for critique, and critique the work of your peers. The OII also provides opportunities for DPhil students to gain teaching experience through mentored assistantship roles in some of its core MSc courses. The department's busy calendar of seminars and events brings many of the most important people in internet research, innovation and policy to the OII, allowing students to engage with cutting-edge scholarship and debates around the internet and digital technologies.

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.

The part-time degree offers the flexibility of part-time study with the same high standards and requirements as the full-time DPhil programme. It also provides an excellent opportunity for professionals in industry and civil society to undertake rigorous long-term research that may be relevant to their career.

If you study part-time, you will be required to attend seminars, supervision meetings, and other obligations in Oxford for a minimum of 30 days each year. Attendance will be required during term-time (a minimum of one day each week). There will be limited flexibility in the dates and pattern of attendance, which will normally be determined by the fixed teaching and seminar schedule during term. Attendance may be required outside of term-time on dates to be determined by mutual agreement with your supervisor. You will have the opportunity to tailor your part-time study in liaison with your supervisor and agree your pattern of attendance.

If you are a full-time student, you will be expected to continue working outside of the University terms with an annual holiday of approximately eight weeks.

Employment

Whilst many graduate students do undertake employment to support their studies, please remember that students on the full-time arrangement of the OII's DPhil programme are subject to limits on the number of hours that may be worked each week. Part-time students are not subject to these limitations.

Within these limitations, many of the OII's existing full-time DPhil students have been employed on a short or long-term basis as Research Assistants on grant-funded projects gaining valuable research experience. The OII also offers Teaching Assistant positions on the MSc degree for DPhil students who can display the appropriate skills. In addition, there are employment opportunities within the University (such as teaching, translation, and research assistance) as well as within the OII.

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 DPhil in Social Data Science is offered by the Oxford Internet Institute (OII) in partnership with Statistics, Engineering Science, Sociology, and other departments.

Our doctoral students are provided with hot-desk working space in the department. You will have access to the OII's computing facilities and dedicated IT support as required for your research project, and may also make use of Oxford's Advanced Research Computing service.

The OII's library specialises in the social sciences, technology and computing including the texts required for the degree. Additionally, the Social Sciences Library provides valuable additional resources of which many students choose to take advantage of.

Supervision

The allocation of graduate supervision for this course is the responsibility of the Oxford Internet Institute and it is not always possible to accommodate the preferences of incoming graduate students to work with a particular member of staff.

Supervision for the DPhil in Social Data Science spans multiple departments (please see the full list of faculty members eligible to supervise DPhil students for this programme). A supervisor may be found outside the list on the course web page, and co-supervision is also possible. All students will have at least one supervisor who is a faculty member of the OII.

Students should normally expect to meet with their supervisor at least three to four times a term. A more typical pattern is weekly or bimonthly, at least until you reach the stage of writing up your thesis.

Assessment

The first year is a probationary year, soon after which, subject to satisfactory progress, you will be expected to transfer from Probationer Research Student (PRS) status to full DPhil status. The Transfer of Status takes place within a maximum of four terms for full-time students or eight terms for part-time students. A second formal assessment of progress, Confirmation of Status, takes place later in the programme, normally at the end of the third year. The Transfer of Status and Confirmation of Status assessments are conducted by two members of staff other than the student's supervisor(s) or advisors.

The sequence of milestones for a DPhil student are as follows:

1. Admission as a Probationer Research Student (PRS)
2. Transfer to DPhil status ('Transfer of Status')
3. Confirmation of DPhil status for DPhil students ('Confirmation of Status')
4. Submission of thesis

Students initially admitted to the status of Probationer Research Student (PRS) are required to attend and pass core modules from the OII's training programme. Students who have already completed similar courses in their past academic career should request an exemption from one or more modules by providing sufficient evidence.

A successful transfer of status from PRS to DPhil status will require the student to show that their proposed thesis represents a viable topic and that their written work and interview show that they have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject. Students are also required to demonstrate satisfactory completion of the foundational courses by this point.

Following successful transfer, students will need to apply for and gain confirmation of DPhil status to show that the work continues to be on track. This will need to be completed within nine terms of admission for full-time students and 18 terms of admission for part-time students.

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

Full-time students will be expected to submit an original thesis of not more than 100,000 words three or, at most, four years from the date of admission. If you are studying part-time, you be required to submit your thesis after six or, at most, eight years from the date of admission. To be successfully awarded a DPhil in Social Data Science you will need to defend your thesis orally (viva voce) in front of two appointed examiners.

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	£14,480
Overseas	£31,090

Part-time study

Fee status	Annual Course fees
Home	£7,240
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 programme that entail additional costs beyond fees 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.

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.

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>).