

Course Information Sheet for entry in 2025-26: DPhil in Fine Art



Course facts

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

The Ruskin School of Art provides an exceptional research environment that enables artists, art historians and art theorists to work closely together in a world-leading, research-intensive university. Its intimate size and its dedication to contemporary art practice and theory within a stimulating and dynamic cross-disciplinary structure allows it to sustain close relations with other academic departments and faculties, distinguishing it from other, larger art schools, and allowing for a wide range of interdisciplinary and collaborative work at DPhil level.

The Ruskin DPhil programme includes two strands: the contemporary art history and theory DPhil (by written thesis only) and the practice-led DPhil (which also includes a substantial written component).

In the case of the contemporary art history and theory DPhil, the Ruskin can offer supervision across a wide range of research projects. These may include aspects of exhibition curating and organisation, as well as the historiography of twentieth-century art and the theorisation of contemporary artistic practices.

In the case of the practice-led DPhil, art work will be undertaken as the central component of the registered research programme, and will be presented in relation to written work that engages with the relevant theoretical, historical, technical, or critical context. The department can offer supervision in most areas of contemporary art practice including moving-image, painting, performance, sculpture, installation and writing.

The two strands of the programme are brought into a productive dialogue, both in a structured way at the regular DPhil research seminars and informally in the studios.

For an indication of the range of practical, historical and theoretical topics that are addressed in the Ruskin School of Art, please see the Ruskin website.

A series of specifically designed Ruskin research seminars complement the students' independent research by offering an opportunity to present research projects, both studio and theoretical. The research seminars follow a small workshop format in which students can present new research work in innovative and experimental ways. The School also has a regular visiting speaker series in which leading artists, scholars and thinkers discuss their latest work. Ruskin students also participate in the Oxford Centre for Research in the Humanities (TORCH), which offers a stimulating range of interdisciplinary activities.

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.

There will be limited flexibility in the dates of attendance, which will be determined by mutual agreement with your supervisor. Attendance will be required during term-time on day(s) each week 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.

The full-time programme is studied over three to four years. The part-time programme has the same requirements, but is studied over six to eight years.

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.

Studio and technical resources

The Ruskin has workshops for specialist training by Ruskin tutors in digital, 2D and 3D media. The project space at the Ruskin's re-developed Bullingdon Road site is equipped for the full breadth of contemporary art practices, from performance and digital installations to painting and sculptural work. The project space opens to the street for maximum public engagement with new work by students and staff. There are also communal spaces to foster dialogue and collaboration across all levels of the Ruskin's undergraduate and graduate programmes.

Museums and galleries

Oxford holds some of the world's richest collections of art and artefacts. The Pitt Rivers Museum, the Museum of Natural History and the Ashmolean Museum are important centres for the research and display of artefacts and artworks within the University of Oxford. Tand the Ruskin has excellent connections with the museums' network of curators, facilities and holdings.

Oxford also hosts important exhibitions of modern and contemporary art. For example, Modern Art Oxford has a national and international reputation for the quality of its exhibitions of contemporary art, and for its accompanying community and education programmes. The Ruskin has worked closely with Modern Art Oxford in the provision of its academic courses, and Ruskin students and staff have participated in exhibitions and public presentations at the gallery.

Libraries and archives

A main point of reference for most Ruskin graduate students is the Bodleian Art, Archaeology and Ancient World Library - one of the principal research libraries of the University, which has incorporated the collections of the former Ashmolean Library (Western art), history of art, Eastern art and Classics. Its holdings are in excess of 200,000 volumes, and include monographs, catalogues, periodicals on fine and decorative art, theory, criticism, historiography, as well as the collections of Edgar Wind and Francis Haskell. All books and periodicals are open access.

In addition to the Bodleian libraries, the Ruskin has its own specialised in-house library of more than 7,000 volumes, providing both lending and reference collections centred on art history, art theory, art techniques, exhibition catalogues and artists' monographs. The Ruskin holds around 20 sets of art journals and more than 2,000 art-related pamphlets. The library is fully integrated into the University's electronic circulation system and a digital archive of the slide collection, comprising 15,000 images, is available on the departmental server. Ruskin library terminals offer full access to the electronic resources of the University of Oxford.

Supervision

The allocation of graduate supervision for this course is the responsibility of the Ruskin School of Art 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 Ruskin School of Art.

Most students have the opportunity to meet regularly with their supervisors, and at least once a term.

Assessment

There are three stages in obtaining the degree of DPhil: Probationer Research Student (PRS) status, DPhil status, and confirmed DPhil status. Transfer (ToS) and Confirmation (CoS) of Status are formal assessment procedures.

Full time PRS students are expected to transfer to full DPhil status in the third or fourth term of their degree. In the case of part-time students, applications for transfer should normally be made by the end of the sixth term. Following transfer to DPhil status, CoS should normally take place in the third year of full-time study or in the fifth/sixth year of part-time study.

Final Submission

The final submission consists of

EITHER

(A) For the Degree of the contemporary art history and theory DPhil, a thesis of up to 80,000 words, and will involve a viva with both an internal and external examiner.

Or

(B) For the Degree of the practice-led DPhil, a thesis of art practice that makes an original contribution to knowledge and a written component, and will involve a viva with both an internal and external examiner.

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	£13,380
Overseas	£34,980

Part-time study

Fee status	Annual Course fees
Home	£6,690
Overseas	£17,490

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

Students on the theory-based course are unlikely to incur any additional costs over and above the routine costs associated with postgraduate study in Humanities subjects. Those on the practice-based DPhil may incur additional costs in the making of their work (costs being variable, depending on the nature of their practice), and in the staging of their exhibited work for examination. Students may apply to the Ruskin Graduate Studies Committee for grants of up to a combined maximum of £500 in the first three years, together with a further grant of £500 to support the costs of installing work for examination up to the end of the 4th year.

Part-time study

Students on the theory-based course are unlikely to incur any additional costs. Those on the practice-based DPhil may incur additional costs in the making of their work (costs being variable, depending on the nature of their practice), and in the staging of their exhibited work for examination. Part-time students may apply to the Ruskin Graduate Studies Committee for grants of up to a combined maximum of £500 in the first six years, together with a further grant of £500 to support the costs of installing work for examination up to the end of their course.

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>).