

Course Information Sheet for entry in 2025-26: DPhil in Musculoskeletal Sciences



Course facts

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

About the course

As a DPhil in Musculoskeletal Sciences student, you will be based in one of the Botnar Research Centre's many research groups, working on a research project supervised by one of the principal investigators and your supervisory team. You will take part in the extensive training programme specifically organised for graduate students within the department.

This DPhil programme focuses on various musculoskeletal and/or musculoskeletal-associated disorders. Key research foci include immune mediated inflammatory disease (including rheumatoid arthritis and inflammatory bowel disease), mechano-inflammatory disease (including osteoarthritis and tendinopathy), various bone cancers, infections, epigenetics, metabolism, aging, microbiome, computational and systems biology, as well as tissue engineering, employing a range of approaches from experimental biology and clinical trials to epidemiology and data sciences.

You will develop your research skills during your first year, including compulsory attendance at the department's fundamentals in biomedical research lectures. During the first term, in consultation with your supervisor, you will develop a training needs plan. Your training will be tailored to your specific project and personal requirements drawing from the vast range of courses available at Oxford and covering specialist scientific methods and transferable skills.

Please note that there is no formal taught component of the DPhil in Musculoskeletal Sciences; however, you will develop your research skills through a range of research training in your first year and by attending departmental/institute journal clubs and seminar series.

During the first term there is compulsory attendance at core lectures on a variety of research techniques and foci in the department including;

- immunology
- inflammation
- tissue engineering
- clinical trial design
- epidemiology
- rheumatology
- orthopaedics
- musculoskeletal diseases.

During your first year, you will be expected to attend a minimum of three topic-related modules. Attendance on a two-day Data Analysis: Statistics Designing Clinical Research and Biostatistics course is compulsory to assist you with appropriate research design. As a component of your training, you will be expected to work with your supervisory team to write a research-specific literature review within the first year of your studies.

You will be required to attend and present at annual institute student symposia, not only to develop your presentation skills but also to benefit from feedback and interactions from your peers and senior academics, additionally you will have an opportunity to present at internal institute seminar series and/or journal clubs.

As a member of Medical Sciences Graduate School, you will be entitled to attend various workshops run by the Medical Sciences Skills Training programme which are run during term time.

Further academic and pastoral support will be provided for by the Departmental Graduate Studies Team and your college advisor. Applicants are strongly advised to visit the Botnar Institute website (also see *Further Information and Enquiries*) to help identify the most suitable research topic and related supervisors. Projects are available across a wide range of basic sciences, pre/clinical studies, data sciences and epidemiology in various musculoskeletal disorders.

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

As a part-time student you will be required to attend induction week, core and specialised lectures, departmental seminars, and workshops as well as individual/group research meetings with your supervisors. You will have the opportunity to tailor your part-time study in liaison with your supervisor and agree your pattern of attendance. Attendance is required for a minimum of thirty days per annum to be arranged with the agreement of your supervisor, for the period that you remain on the Register of Graduate Students.

Attendance in person will be required during term-time as determined by mutual agreement with your supervisor. This will solely depend on the nature of your studies (clinical or basic science) and the percentage of FTE that you will be conducting your research (no less than 0.5 FTE).

Attendance outside of term-time will be similar to that during the academic terms. Research protocol and experimentation should be planned and completed based on the available timeline for submission of various milestones set by the Division.

You will also be required to attend termly meeting with your Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) to discuss your academic progress.

Provision exists for students on some courses to undertake their research in a 'well-founded laboratory' outside of the University. This may require travel to and attendance at a site that is not located in Oxford. Where known, existing collaborations will be outlined on this page. Please read the course information carefully, including the additional information about course fees and costs.

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.

There is student representation within the various departmental committees, providing student-led support as well as representing students' interests in departmental decision-making.

You will have access to a wide range of resources within the department and University, including the following facilities.

Libraries

You will have access to the Cairns Library based in the John Radcliffe Hospital and musculoskeletal-related topics at the Girdlestone Library located at the Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre's Knowledge Centre on the Old Road Campus.

Study and experimental space

Workspace will be related to and dependent on your individual circumstances. If undertaking experimental "wet" lab work, you will be provided with bench space in a relevant laboratory. If undertaking data analysis and computer-based research, you will be allocated an office space that may be shared.

Lectures and seminars

You will be notified by regular emails about seminar schedules within the department and you are encouraged to visit the Oxford Talk website to access other departments' and divisions' seminars and lectures.

NDORMS Student Committee

There is an active student committee which organises regular social events, a Christmas gathering with a band, and a picnic in the park during the summer. At least two students are represented at the department's Graduate Studies Committee, the Athena SWAN Committee and the University's Graduate Joint Consultative Committee to express students' opinions, concerns and views.

Supervision

The allocation of graduate supervision for this course is the responsibility of Medical Sciences and the Nuffield Department of Orthopaedics, Rheumatology and Musculoskeletal Sciences (NDORMS) 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 Medical Sciences and NDORMS.

All students must have a core supervisory team of at least two supervisors. At the beginning of your programme, you will meet with your supervisors regularly to finalise your project and agree on an initial programme of research. Within the first three months, you will complete an analysis of your training needs for the duration of your research (TNA) with your supervisor and submit it as part of your compulsory termly reporting.

Regularity of student/supervisor meetings will be agreed between the student and supervisors directly. Every student should meet their supervisors at least once per month.

Within the first six to twelve months (twelve to twenty-four months for part-time students) you are expected to complete a literature review on a topic relating to your area of research.

In the case of students who require specific help to adjust to an academic programme or to a new range of skills, the supervisor will work with them to ensure that they have additional support.

Members of the co-supervisory team may come from other departments in the University.

The Thesis Committee is an important second strand of supervisory support and is compulsory at the Botnar Research Centre; further information can be provided by the Graduate Studies Team.

Assessment

Your attainment will be evaluated via:

1. Completion of termly reports by you and your supervisor(s) through Graduate Supervision Reporting (GSR)
2. Transfer of Status, to be completed before the end of the fourth term (eighth term for part-time students). The process includes preparation and submission of a transfer report and assessment in a viva.
3. Confirmation of your status, by viva and presentation, before the end of the ninth term (18th term for part-time students).
4. Submission and defence of the final thesis by viva, no later than twelfth term (twenty fourth term for part-time students - depending on funding duration).

Stages 2, 3 and 4 will be assessed by two independent senior academics to ensure you are on track with your research and that you are receiving adequate guidance.

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	£10,070
Overseas	£33,370

Part-time study

Fee status	Annual Course fees
Home	£5,035
Overseas	£16,685

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.

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>).