

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



Course facts

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

About the course

The Department of Social Policy and Intervention offers a DPhil in Social Policy and welcomes students from across the world. Research students are an important part of the department's community, and you will be fully involved and immersed in the life of the department.

The department welcomes DPhil candidates who are interested in a wide range of areas of social policy research, such as welfare systems within and across countries, family and family policies, educational inequalities and educational policies, economic and social inequalities, social mobility and inequality of opportunity, labour market institutions and policies, retirement age policies, transition from work to retirement and public attitudes on welfare state issues. This varied research portfolio is organised within the Oxford Institute of Social Policy.

The department's approach to graduate study emphasises your ability to work independently to explore an original line of research under an academic supervisor. Each member of academic staff has expertise in a particular area of social policy and you will only be accepted for a DPhil if there is an appropriate supervisor available.

As a doctoral student, you will be offered a unique graduate programme tailored to your individual needs. In addition to individual supervision, the department offers a diverse range of seminars, workshops and advanced training opportunities in order to further enhance graduate research experience.

The department runs several seminar series on social policy, social intervention, and on methodologies— during the year, providing the opportunity to hear external expert speakers. In addition, there is a regular colloquium at which members of the department present and discuss their research, creating an excellent chance for staff and students to learn more about each others' ideas or receive input on their own research. DPhil students also belong to one of the department's research groups, which provide an opportunity to present their work and explore themed areas in more depth with colleagues with similar interests.

The department's established methods hub provides research students with general support on qualitative and quantitative research methods, as well as with more specialised and tailored training. In addition, through the Oxford Social Sciences Division a range of methods-training seminars and summer schools are offered.

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. The part-time degree is particularly well-suited for students who are seeking flexibility and it provides an excellent opportunity for professionals to undertake rigorous long-term research that may be relevant to their working life.

As a part-time student you will be required to attend classes/seminars/research groups/supervision meetings and other obligations in Oxford. There will be limited flexibility in the dates and pattern of attendance, which will be determined by mutual agreement with your supervisor.

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 department has its own IT provision and specialist IT support staff. You will have access to the Bodleian Social Science Library, in addition to other University libraries, and the centrally provided electronic resources.

The department has two rooms designated for graduate research students, one used by social policy students and the other used by social intervention and policy evaluation students. The department aims to provide as much space as possible. You will also be able to book the department's meeting rooms and lecture rooms if required.

The department has a common room open to both staff and students. Barnett House Thursday coffee mornings are held fortnightly and these occasions provide excellent opportunities for talking to academics and research staff, and fellow students.

Supervision

The allocation of graduate supervision for this course is the responsibility of the Department of Social Policy and Intervention 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 Department of Social Policy and Intervention.

Students should normally expect to meet with their supervisor around three to four times a term.

Assessment

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

All students will be initially admitted to the status of Probationer Research Student (PRS). Within a maximum of four terms as a full-time PRS student or eight as a part-time PRS student, you will be expected to apply for, and achieve, transfer of status from Probationer Research Student to DPhil status. This application is normally made by the third term for full-time students and by the sixth term for part-time students.

A successful transfer of status from PRS to DPhil status will require the student to show that their proposed thesis and treatment represents a viable topic and that their written work and interview show that they have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject. Students who are successful at transfer will also be expected to apply for and gain confirmation of DPhil status to show that your work continues to be on track. This will need to be achieved within nine terms of admission for full-time students and eighteen terms of admission for part-time students.

Both milestones normally 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 a substantial thesis after 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 Policy, 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	£16,330
Overseas	£29,350

Part-time study

Fee status	Annual Course fees
Home	£8,165
Overseas	£14,675

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. Students may also wish to attend or present their work at academic conferences. 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>).