

Course Information Sheet for entry in 2025-26: PGCert in Patient Safety and Quality Improvement



Course facts

Mode of study	Part Time Only
Expected length	1 to 2 years

About the course

The Postgraduate Certificate (PGCert) in Patient Safety and Quality Improvement is a part-time course for healthcare professionals, offered by the Department for Continuing Education in collaboration with the Nuffield Department of Surgical Sciences. It can be completed in one year (though two years is possible), and consists of three modules, each a week long and taught in Oxford. The department provides online support and e-Library access for distance learning on either side of the Oxford-based weeks.

The course will appeal to doctors, nurses, allied health professionals, managers and others who have an interest in patient safety and quality improvement.

By taking the Postgraduate Certificate in Patient Safety and Quality Improvement, you will gain a deeper understanding of the factors influencing patient safety, learn how to investigate safety problems and how to make care safer. You will also learn about quality improvement approaches and how to better understand our complex healthcare systems so as to improve quality of care across multiple domains, such as outcomes, patient experience and timeliness. You will gain an understanding of:

- How to take a broad, systems view of the care system you want to understand and improve, including how to develop insight into technical, human and organisational dimensions of an improvement or safety challenge
- The underlying principles behind the sometimes-confusing array of quality improvement methods, each with their own advocates and jargon, learning how these methods relate to one another and how they fit into an overarching model of quality improvement
- How to measure different aspects of quality and care systems
- Why changes that initially succeed will, more often than not, degrade over time – and what works to prevent this so that initial changes are sustained and further improvement can be built upon them
- Approaches for understanding and improving safety in healthcare including human factors, design and ergonomics

There is a growing evidence base that quality improvement and human factors-based projects in healthcare have real impact on clinical outcomes for patients. The University of Oxford has a strong research base in patient safety, and this course benefits from the researchers' intensive collaboration with clinicians.

You will attend two core modules and one optional module. The core modules are:

- Quality Improvement Science and Systems Analysis
- Human Factors, Teamwork and Communication.

Your optional module is chosen from:

- Leadership and Management in Health Care
- Becoming a Clinical Educator
- Healthcare Innovation and Technology

Each module includes a period of preparatory study and one week of full time, face-to-face teaching in Oxford, which is then followed by a period for assignment work. The modules can be studied in any order and each module normally takes place once a year giving you the opportunity to individualise your patterns of study.

The taught week is an intensive week of seminar-style teaching, class discussions, guest lectures, interaction with tutors and lecturers, workshops and practical sessions.

In the four weeks running up to each taught week you should expect to dedicate 4-6 hours per week to preparatory reading. In the six weeks following each taught week you should expect to dedicate 10-15 hours per week to researching and writing your module assignment.

Attendance

This course is part-time. You will be required to attend a week of face-to-face teaching in Oxford for each module.

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 Rewley House Continuing Education Library, one of the Bodleian Libraries, is situated in Rewley House. The department aims to support the wide variety of subjects covered by departmental courses at many academic levels. The department also has a collection of around 73,000 books together with periodicals. PCs in the library give access to the internet and the full range of electronic resources subscribed to by the University of Oxford. The Jessop Reading Room adjoining the library is available for study.

The department provides various IT facilities, including the Student Computing Facility which provides individual PCs for your use.

Supervision

The allocation of graduate supervision for this course is the responsibility of the Department for Continuing Education and/or the Nuffield Department of Surgical Sciences, and this role will usually be performed by the Course Director.

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 for Continuing Education and/or the Nuffield Department of Surgical Sciences.

Assessment

Students must complete two core modules and one optional module, taken in any order.

To complete the PGCert in Patient Safety and Quality Improvement, you will need to:

- attend the two core and one optional modules in Oxford;
- undertake and pass an assessed written assignment for each module.

The written assignments help you develop and demonstrate your growing knowledge and understanding of the subject areas covered, and will provide you with the opportunity to develop your critical appraisal and written presentation skills. The assignments are usually set such that they are an opportunity to apply what you have learned to your own work setting or practice, helping you translate classroom learning to your own context.

You will need to be able to write a good standard of academic English to pass the assignments. For those that require a refresher, the Department of Continuing Education offers a 10-week, online course to refresh and improve your reading, note-making and essay-writing skills. You will be given written feedback on each of the assignments you submit, intended to help you continue to develop your critical appraisal and academic writing skills.

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

Modular course fees

The fees for this course are charged on a modular basis. You will pay an annual course fee and an additional fee for each module studied. A minimum of one annual course fee is payable for this course. If this course includes a dissertation, three module fees will be charged for the dissertation.

Fees for the 2025-26 academic year

Fee status	Annual Course Fee	Fee per module	Total estimated fees
Home	£2,195	£2,740	Please see the department's website for further details
Overseas	£10,345	£2,740	

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.

Additional cost information

This course has residential sessions in Oxford. You will need to meet your travel and accommodation costs in attending these sessions.

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>).