

Course Information Sheet for entry in 2025-26: MSc in Archaeology



Course facts

Mode of study	Full Time Only
Expected length	11 months

About the course

The MSc in Archaeology provides an opportunity for students to build on their knowledge from undergraduate studies and to specialise in a particular area of archaeology, while also offering an excellent foundation for those wishing to continue towards research at doctoral level. It also offers transferable skills which are beneficial to a range of professional roles.

During this 11-month taught master's degree you will specialise in a particular area of archaeology, and will follow a subject stream, which will comprise four modules and a dissertation.

The MSc in Archaeology allows subject specialisation, but also flexibility, by combining core modules with an option module, and topics chosen for your dissertation and summative pre-set essays. If you wish to specialise in the theory and practical applications of science in archaeology, please consider applying to the MSc in Archaeological Science rather than the MSc in Archaeology.

You will choose from one of the following subject streams:

Archaeology of Asia

Core module: Archaeological Principles: Data and Theory

This core module, which all students take in the first term, is designed to prepare you with necessary archaeological knowledge, research and practical skills to support your other modules and dissertation.

Example List A modules - not all modules are offered every year

- Chinese Archaeology I: Neolithic to Bronze Age

Example List B modules - not all modules are offered every year

- Chinese Archaeology II: Shang to Qin
- Interdisciplinary Approaches to Chinese Ceramics
- Early Human Dispersals in Asia and the Pacific
- Archaeology of Eurasia
- The Emergence of Farming in Western Asia

Option module

The fourth module is your option module, taught in the second term. This is chosen from all available modules in any stream, or an option from the MSt in Classical Archaeology. In some circumstances a subject taught in the MSc in Archaeological Science may be taken as your option module and is taught over two terms.

Environmental Archaeology

Core module: Archaeological Principles: Data and Theory

This core module, which all students take in the first term, is designed to prepare you with necessary archaeological knowledge, research and practical skills to support your other modules and dissertation.

Example List A modules - not all modules are offered every year

- Environmental Archaeology

Example List B modules - not all modules are offered every year

- Practical Archaeobotany
- The Emergence of Farming in Western Asia
- Bio-Archaeology

Option module

The fourth module is your option module, taught in the second term. This is chosen from all available modules in any stream, or an option from the MSt in Classical Archaeology. In some circumstances a subject taught in the MSc in Archaeological Science may be taken as your option module and is taught over two terms.

Landscape Archaeology**Core module: Archaeological Principles: Data and Theory**

This core module, which all students take in the first term, is designed to prepare you with necessary archaeological knowledge, research and practical skills to support your other modules and dissertation.

Example List A modules - not all modules are offered every year

- Landscape Archaeology and Spatial Technology

Example List B modules - not all modules are offered every year

- Archaeology and Geographical Information Systems

Option module

The fourth module is your option module, taught in the second term. This is chosen from all available modules in any stream, or an option from the MSt in Classical Archaeology. In some circumstances a subject taught in the MSc in Archaeological Science may be taken as your option module and is taught over two terms.

Maritime Archaeology**Core module: Archaeological Principles: Data and Theory**

This core module, which all students take in the first term, is designed to prepare you with necessary archaeological knowledge, research and practical skills to support your other modules and dissertation.

Example List A modules - not all modules are offered every year

- Maritime Societies

Example List B modules - not all modules are offered every year

- Maritime Archaeology
- Methods and Techniques in Maritime Archaeology

Option module

The fourth module is your option module, taught in the second term. This is chosen from all available modules in any stream, or an option from the MSt in Classical Archaeology. In some circumstances a subject taught in the MSc in Archaeological Science may be taken as your option module and is taught over two terms.

Medieval Archaeology

Core module: Archaeological Principles: Data and Theory

This core module, which all students take in the first term, is designed to prepare you with necessary archaeological knowledge, research and practical skills to support your other modules and dissertation.

Example List A modules - not all modules are offered every year

- Europe in the Early Middle Ages (AD 400 - 900)
- Archaeology of Later Medieval Europe

Example List B modules - not all modules are offered every year

- Archaeology of Early Anglo-Saxon England
- Archaeology of Late Saxon England
- Body and Adornment: Material Culture of Later Medieval Britain (AD 1200 - 1600)
- Byzantine Constantinople
- Archaeology of Lived Religion in Late Antiquity
- Late Roman and Byzantine Architecture

Option module

The fourth module is your option module, taught in the second term. This is chosen from all available modules in any stream, or an option from the MSt in Classical Archaeology. In some circumstances a subject taught in the MSc in Archaeological Science may be taken as your option module and is taught over two terms.

Prehistory and Pre-colonial Archaeology

Core module: Archaeological Principles: Data and Theory

This core module, which all students take in the first term, is designed to prepare you with necessary archaeological knowledge, research and practical skills to support your other modules and dissertation.

Example List A modules - not all modules are offered every year

- European Prehistory from the Mesolithic to the Bronze Age
- Farming and States in Sub-Saharan Africa
- Archaeological Method and Theory

Example List B modules - not all modules are offered every year

- Archaeology of Southern African Hunter-Gatherers
- Early Human Dispersals in Asia and the Pacific

Option module

The fourth module is your option module, taught in the second term. This is chosen from all available modules in any stream, or an option from the MSt in Classical Archaeology. In some circumstances a subject taught in the MSc in Archaeological Science may be taken as your option module and is taught over two terms.

Social Archaeology

Core module: Archaeological Principles: Data and Theory

This core module, which all students take in the first term, is designed to prepare you with necessary archaeological knowledge, research and practical skills to support your other modules

and dissertation.

Example List A modules - not all modules are offered every year

- Archaeological Method and Theory

Example List B modules - not all modules are offered every year

- Archaeology of Colonialism
Archaeology of the Contemporary World
Cognitive Archaeology

Option module

The fourth module is your option module, taught in the second term. This is chosen from all available modules in any stream, or an option from the MSt in Classical Archaeology. In some circumstances a subject taught in the MSc in Archaeological Science may be taken as your option module and is taught over two terms.

Dissertation

All students will complete a dissertation of 15,000 words on an approved topic relevant to your stream subject, chosen in consultation with a supervisor. Most of the dissertation research and writing takes place in the third term and into the summer. The dissertation allows you to develop a larger piece of research in which you can more fully explore a topic. It will allow you to develop your research skills and undertake self-directed and independent research that is a necessary basis for future doctoral research, and highly desirable in non-academic employment.

Teaching and learning

Teaching of stream modules is mainly through a combination of lectures and tutorials which are normally taught in small-groups. Other teaching methods may also include seminars, museum-based classes, laboratory work or other practicals, depending on your stream and module choices. You will usually prepare formative assignments on a weekly or fortnightly basis for your modules. The core Archaeological Principles: Data and Theory module is taught by lectures and seminars and will include group work; the assignments given in this module will form the basis of an assessed portfolio.

The teaching methods provide you with the opportunity to debate and discuss essays and topics on a regular basis with other students and teachers. Your assignments will also allow you to develop your writing and presentation skills. The seminars, museum-based classes, laboratory work and practicals provide an arena for you to engage with and develop techniques of analysis and evaluation.

You will have an academic advisor in your subject stream who will advise on module choices and monitor overall progress.

The teaching is supplemented by a wide range of lecture courses, seminar series, and the Graduate Archaeology at Oxford skills seminar series available in the School of Archaeology. The degree is a very intensive course, and you will be expected to treat the University vacations as integral parts of your academic work time.

Each member of the academic staff in archaeology normally offers at least one module in his or her areas of specialism over the year, but some modules or streams listed may not be available every year.

Graduate students run their own organisation, Graduate Archaeology at Oxford, which provides further skills seminars, a mentoring programme, social events and a very successful conference series. This provides many opportunities for you to develop your skills, present your research and develop ideas for the next stage of your career.

Attendance

The course is full-time and requires attendance in Oxford. Full-time students are subject to the University's Residence requirements.

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 School of Archaeology provides the following resources for students:

- computers with specialist GIS and mapping-related software
- a wide-range of digital facilities, including desktop imaging and manipulation for publication and dissertation/thesis production such as full-colour scanning of slides, negatives, maps and other paper plan originals
- lecture, seminar and common rooms
- a small library with a searchable catalogue available online in the Institute of Archaeology.

In addition, the Bodleian Art, Archaeology and Ancient World Library, a world-class library for archaeology, is situated between the Institute of Archaeology and the Ashmolean Museum, and is the central facility, providing for most student needs. Students also use the Balfour Library of anthropology and ethnography.

The School of Archaeology has close ties with the Ashmolean Museum and the Pitt Rivers Museum, the collections of which may contribute to graduate teaching.

Supervision

Every student will have a general supervisor appointed to them prior to the start of term. You will also be allocated a dissertation supervisor who, during your supervision meetings, will discuss and guide your research. They will usually be one of the teachers in your subject stream.

For this course, the allocation of graduate supervision is the responsibility of the School of Archaeology 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 School of Archaeology.

Assessment

The Archaeological Principles: Data and Theory core module is assessed by a portfolio of work.

Your first subject stream module will be assessed by take-home essays submitted in the second term.

Your second subject stream module and your chosen option module will be assessed by extended essays submitted in the third term.

A stream-specific dissertation of a maximum of 15,000 words will be submitted in late August.

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

Fee status	Annual Course fees
Home	£17,250
Overseas	£36,250

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

There are no compulsory elements of this course that entail additional costs beyond fees and living costs. However, as part of your course requirements, you may need to choose a dissertation, a project or a thesis topic. Please note that, depending on your choice of 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.

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.

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>).