

## Course Information Sheet for entry in 2025-26: MSc in Social Data Science



### Course facts

Mode of study	Full Time Only
Expected length	10 months

### About the course

The multidisciplinary MSc in Social Data Science welcomes students with an interest in applying quantitative and computational methods to questions of social and political significance for academics, policymakers, and the public.

With the rapid expansion of big data and artificial intelligence (AI) in society there is a need both to understand how to best make use of these tools, as well as to consider their social implications from a practical and grounded perspective. This is an applied program that combines machine learning, multivariate statistics, mixed-methods research, and a substantive focus on social, ethical, and legal considerations for AI and data broadly and for the governance and regulation of the internet more specifically.

The MSc in Social Data Science is primarily assessed by essays that apply these methods to a substantive research question. This involves motivating the question with domain-level academic expertise and motivating the analysis with an understanding of the potential and limits of specific (usually computational) methodologies.

The three term MSc is designed for students with some familiarity with programming and a strong background in social sciences, although applications are welcomed from all disciplinary backgrounds who meet the formal requirements.

The course is administered by the Oxford Internet Institute (OII), a department within the Social Sciences Division. Teaching and supervision faculty are drawn from the OII as well as a variety of departments around the University such as Engineering Science, Mathematics, Linguistics, Statistics, and Sociology.

It is an ideal course for ambitious students at the intersection of computing and the social sciences who are seeking careers with data in the public, private, and non-profit sectors. The OII's busy calendar of seminars and events showcases many of the most noteworthy people in internet research, innovation and policy, allowing you to engage with the cutting edge of scholarship and debates around internet technologies and AI.

You will join a cohesive cohort and will be expected to dedicate around 40 hours to this course each week during term, and to undertake further study and complete assessments during termly vacation periods. During Michaelmas and Hilary terms, this equates to roughly 10 and 15 hours each week for each course taken.

In the first term (Michaelmas), this includes:

- At least 20 hours per week on reading, preparation and formative assignments (ten hours for the intensive course, five hours for each of the two foundation courses)
- 16 to 20 hours per week in classes (typically one and a half to two hours of lectures daily, one and a half to two hours of tutorials and practical exercises three to four days a week, plus additional seminars or workshops on certain courses)

In the second (Hilary) term, this includes:

- At least 24 hours per week on reading, preparation and formative assignments (6 hours for each core/option course)
- Ten to 12 hours per week in classes (typically one and a half to two hours of lectures per course, plus a one-hour seminar or workshop on certain core and methods-based courses)

Due to the intensive nature of the taught portion of this course, there is no part-time option available. However, students continuing on to doctoral study have the option of taking a part-time DPhil.

### Compulsory Intensive Courses

You will take one compulsory intensive course in Data Science and Machine Learning during the first term. This course covers:

- Fundamentals of Social Data Science in Python, an intensive programming primer to get people up to speed on the Python programming language for use with data science.
- Computational complexity and how to profile and increase the computational efficiency of Python code.
- Introductory machine learning, covering the fundamentals of both supervised and unsupervised learning.

### Compulsory Foundation Courses

You will take three compulsory foundation courses across the first two terms:

### **Foundations and Frontiers of Social Data Science**

This course introduces students to some of the fundamental questions that have been raised in this domain across the social sciences, before taking a look into the future and focusing on the emerging role of data in specific contexts.

### **Applied Analytical Statistics**

Applied analytical statistics is a course focusing on the tools and techniques used by social scientists to understand, describe and analyse (quantitative) data.

### **Research Design for Social Data Science**

This course introduces students to conceptual and methodological aspects of social science research methods, including both quantitative and qualitative methods.

### **Option subjects**

You will take two option modules during the second term of the year. Option modules run for eight weeks. Recent option modules have included:

- Applied Machine Learning
- Digital Era Government and Politics
- Experiments in Social Data Science
- Fairness Accountability and Transparency in Machine Learning
- Internet Economics
- Introduction to Natural Language Processing for the Social Sciences
- Social Network Analysis and Interpretation
- Data-driven Network Science

Please note that not all options run every year.

### **Attendance**

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

### **Employment**

Whilst many graduate students do undertake employment to support their studies, please remember that it is not recommended that MSc students take on even part-time employment during term-time. Within these limitations, some of the OII's existing MSc students have been employed on a short-term basis as Research Assistants on grant-funded projects, but only with the agreement of their supervisor, the MSc Course Convener and the Director of Graduate Studies.

### **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.

Our MSc students are provided with hot-desk working space in the department. You will have access to OII's dedicated computing facilities and IT support, which includes collaborative software, server space, and computing resources, as well as access to ARC, Oxford's high-performance computing cluster.

The departmental library provides students access to a range of resources including the texts required for the degree. Other University libraries provide valuable additional resources of which many students choose to take advantage.

### **Supervision**

The allocation of graduate supervision for this course is the responsibility of the Oxford Internet Institute and it is not always possible to accommodate the preferences of incoming graduate students to work with a particular member of staff.

You can expect to meet with your supervisor eight to ten times over the course of the degree. You will be assigned a general supervisor in your first term who will be the point of contact for keeping an eye on your academic progress. In the second term (Hilary term), you will be reassigned to a thesis supervisor in order to ensure that student needs and skills are properly matched.

Thesis supervisors are responsible for giving written feedback on at least one complete draft of your thesis prior to submission as well as additional advice on research design, data access, and analysis methods.

### **Assessment**

MSc Social Data Science course assessment will either be conducted by timed examination or individual coursework submissions. Please note that the format of assessment for a particular course may change from year to year. The two main assessment periods are the winter vacation (December and January) and the spring vacation (March and April).

During each course you take you will receive regular feedback on formative exercises, assignments, and essays. This feedback does not count towards your final mark but prepares you for the graded summative work due after the completion of each course.

The core course Introduction to Data Science and Machine Learning is currently assessed by a short-duration take-home paper. All other core and option courses are assessed by coursework, normally either an essay or research project.

In the third term, you will be assessed by a thesis on a topic of your choosing in consultation with a thesis supervisor. The thesis is the capstone to the MSc experience, providing students with the opportunity to apply the methods and approaches they have covered in the other parts of the course and carry out a substantive piece of academic research.

### **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	£27,600
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 will need to choose dissertation, project or thesis topics. 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
<b>Food</b>	£330	£515
<b>Accommodation</b>	£790	£955
<b>Personal items</b>	£200	£335
<b>Social activities</b>	£45	£100
<b>Study costs</b>	£40	£90
<b>Other</b>	£20	£40
<b>Total</b>	£1,425	£2,035

### Likely living costs for nine months

	Lower range	Upper range
<b>Food</b>	£2,970	£4,635
<b>Accommodation</b>	£7,110	£8,595
<b>Personal items</b>	£1,800	£3,015
<b>Social activities</b>	£405	£900
<b>Study costs</b>	£360	£810
<b>Other</b>	£180	£360
<b>Total</b>	£12,825	£18,315

### Likely living costs for twelve months

	Lower range	Upper range
<b>Food</b>	£3,960	£6,180
<b>Accommodation</b>	£9,480	£11,460
<b>Personal items</b>	£2,400	£4,020
<b>Social activities</b>	£540	£1,200
<b>Study costs</b>	£480	£1,080
<b>Other</b>	£240	£480
<b>Total</b>	£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](http://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](mailto:graduate.admissions@admin.ox.ac.uk)) or via the online form (<http://www.graduate.ox.ac.uk/ask/form>).