

Course Information Sheet for entry in 2025-26: MSc in Surgical Science and Practice



Course facts

Mode of study	Part Time Only
Expected length	2 to 4 years

About the course

The MSc in Surgical Science and Practice is a transformative part-time modular programme which attracts healthcare professionals from around the world and is completed over two to four years.

The taught component of the course comprises six modules, spaced over the year and each a week long, with teaching taking place in person in Oxford. A research project carried out over the course of a year completes the masters. It is usually a work-based project and is supported by an Oxford supervisor.

The modular nature of the course allows you to fit study around your work and the majority of students have full- or part-time clinical roles.

Run in collaboration with Oxford's Nuffield Department of Surgical Sciences, the MSc is designed for trainees and consultants in surgical disciplines as well as practitioners of other clinical disciplines interested in better understanding the systems within which they practice and increasing their effectiveness working in those systems. It particularly appeals to those who wish to develop a further dimension to their role, such as a leadership position, academic, teaching or research role, as well as those taking their career in new directions.

Course objectives

The aim of the course is to give you a strong foundation in the most important non-clinical skills you will need to be effective and to lead others in providing safe, high quality, high reliability care. It will prepare you for life as an independent specialist, building skills and knowledge which are not fully represented or are omitted from graduate training curricula. Alumni of the course have used the MSc as a platform to:

- Lead larger teams and take on greater organisational responsibility
- Carry out significant quality improvement initiatives and introduce innovations in practice
- Conduct and publish research including non-clinical healthcare research
- Take on new leadership and academic roles, either alongside continuing clinical responsibilities or as a new direction in their career
- Develop new educational programmes and training methods

You can read about how some recent graduates have applied what they learned in the student profiles section of the department's website.

Healthcare professionals work as part of multi-disciplinary teams in complex organisations. Thus the syllabus covers leadership, teamwork, management skills, quality improvement and patient safety, development and implementation of new technologies and procedures, principles of medical education and how to appraise evidence to answer clinical questions. Students completing the course will have developed the skills and knowledge to:

- Understand the principles of leading a team and how to foster a culture of effective teamwork
- Understand the dynamics at play within healthcare organisations and healthcare systems, and how to increase your influence
- Apply the principles of human factors and ergonomics to understanding error in healthcare and designing practices that maximise safety and reliability
- Analyse and improve clinical care pathways and settings of care using quality improvement science and systems analysis methods
- Develop further as a mentor and educator, including setting up and running courses, designing curricula and evaluating educational provision
- Critically appraise clinical evidence and assess its validity and relevance to your practice
- Understand basic business and financial aspects of the health care industry, and their relevance for understanding how to navigate your own organisation
- Understand how to develop and implement innovations in healthcare including creating business plans and business cases for your own area of practice

A more detailed description of the course curriculum can be found on the department's website.

Course structure

The MSc in Surgical Science and Practice is organised around six compulsory week-long modules, plus a work-based research project written up as a dissertation. The programme is normally completed in two or three years, but up to four years can be taken. Students are full members of the University of Oxford and are matriculated as members of an Oxford college.

Modules

An important and perhaps unique feature of the course is that the modules can be studied in any order and, as each module runs once a year, you can individualise your pattern of study by choosing which modules to attend in each year of your enrolment.

Taught by experts in their field, the modules in this course can also be taken as individual stand-alone courses:

- Becoming a Clinical Educator
- Human Factors, Teamwork and Communication
- Leadership and Management in Health Care
- Quality Improvement Science and Systems Analysis
- Healthcare Innovation and technology
- Practice of Evidence-Based Health Care

For detailed information about each module, please refer to the course page on the department's website.

Learning and teaching

Each module comprises a period of preparatory study of around 4 weeks), a week of intensive in-person teaching, followed by a period for assignment work of around 6 weeks.

In the four weeks running up to each taught week you should expect to dedicate 4-6 hours per week to preparatory reading and activities, accessed via the course's dedicated virtual learning environment (VLE) which also provides support and resources between modules.

The taught week is full-time for five days and involves seminar-style teaching, group work, class discussions, guest lectures and interaction with tutors and lecturers. The taught weeks include practical activities to develop skills including at facilities elsewhere in the University, such as surgical simulators and operating theatres on the University's hospital sites. Optional evening social activities are organised by students.

Students on the Postgraduate Certificate (PGCert) in Patient Safety and Quality Improvement attend some of the MSc modules, in particular the Quality Improvement and Human Factors modules. PGCert students have a range of backgrounds including nurses, allied healthcare professionals and managers as well as doctors. This mix reflects the healthcare workplace and enriches classroom discussions.

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. This is an opportunity to explore areas of particular interest in more depth, and to apply what you have learned your work setting.

Course duration

The modular nature of the course and the ability to take modules in any order allows you to individualise your pattern of study, including the intensity of study, so long as the course is completed in a maximum of 4 years. Some examples of patterns of study:

- Years 1 and 2: 3 taught modules in each year. Year 3: supervised research project and dissertation. Total duration: 3 years.
- Year 1: 4 taught modules. Year 2: 2 taught modules. Year 3: supervised research project and dissertation. Total duration: 3 years.
- Year 1: 5 taught modules. Year 2: 1 taught module and supervised research project and dissertation. Total duration: 2 years.
- Years 1, 2 and 3: 2 taught modules in each year. Year 4: supervised research project and dissertation. Total duration: 4 years.

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 Nuffield Department of Surgical Sciences and/or the Department for Continuing Education and this role will usually be performed by the Course Director.

It is sometimes 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 Nuffield Department of Surgical Sciences and/or Department for Continuing Education.

The University expects there to be contact between supervisor and student at least once per month.

Assessment

To complete the MSc in Surgical Science and Practice, you will need to:

- attend the six compulsory modules - five in Oxford, one online (Practice of Evidence-Based Health Care is taught online);
- undertake and pass an assessed written assignment for each module; and
- after attending all six modules, complete and pass an assessed dissertation on a topic founded on a work-based research project that will build on the material studied in the taught modules.

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 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 two annual course fees are 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. Further, as part of your course requirements, you may need to choose a dissertation, a project or a thesis topic. 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.

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>).