

Course Information Sheet for entry in 2025-26: MPhil in Economic and Social History



Course facts

Mode of study	Full Time Only
Expected length	21 months

About the course

Economic and social history is the study of economic activities and social organisation in the historical past. This two-year specialist course offers a unique framework for research training in economic and social history.

The MPhil in Economic and Social History offers a wide range of options and allows you to specialise in economic and/or social history, or historical demography, although the boundaries between these areas are deliberately permeable. It is intended to introduce you to the wide variety of methods used in the study of economic and social history, as well as to the subject itself.

The explicitly interdisciplinary nature of this MPhil means that the Faculty of History collaborates with other divisions and departments within the University. It is offered jointly by the Faculty of History and the Department of Economics.

History at Oxford stretches from around c. 300 to the present and embraces an exceptionally broad geographical range. It comprises an active research community of up to 800 academics and graduate students.

The MPhil Economic and Social History can be taken as a free-standing degree, or can serve as a springboard to doctoral study. If you wish to apply for the DPhil following the MPhil, you will be encouraged to develop your doctoral proposal during the first few months of the second year of the course, so that you will be well placed to make doctoral applications.

Course structure

The course comprises two core courses, four option courses, and a research project.

Core courses

The core qualifying papers provide an opportunity to evaluate a range of different qualitative and quantitative methodological approaches; they impart a common language, and create a close and friendly community, in which ideas are shared, and strong personal ties are forged, developing a community that provides a base from which to venture out and experience the intellectual, social and cultural rewards of Oxford.

1. What happened and why

An introduction to themes and approaches in economic and social history' focuses on social sciences methodologies and approaches and taught through a series of lectures and parallel classes during Michaelmas term.

2. Quantitative methods

You can take either the standard or advanced course in quantitative methods, depending on your previous statistical and/or econometric training.

The standard course in quantitative methods and computer applications for economic and social history is a simple and very informal introduction to elementary quantitative methods covering some of the techniques most widely used in research in the historical and social sciences and emphasizing the relevance of the historical issues. No prior knowledge of mathematics or statistical theory is expected.

The advanced course in quantitative methods is intended for students who have already been introduced to some form of quantitative methods, with the first few sessions serving as a refresher course in elementary quantitative methods. The course aims to ensure that you are aware of the range of quantitative techniques available for analysing problems in economic and social history.

You will be taught how to use a number of popular statistical and econometric packages. Teaching sessions will involve computer classwork. Under certain circumstances, very accomplished students may undertake a more advanced statistics paper from elsewhere in the University, such as the MPhil in Economics.

Option courses

You will take four advanced option papers usually taught in small classes, mostly during Hilary and/or Trinity terms of both years.

Examples of recent option courses are:

- History of Economic Thought
- International Money and Finance since 1945
- Social and Cultural Change in France 1600 – 1720
- Topics in African Economic History.

More information on advanced paper options and core courses, can be found on the faculty's website.

Please note that not every option listed may be on offer every year, depending in part on levels of student demand.

Research project

An original research project on a topic of your choice, approved by your supervisor. You will agree the title with your supervisor in Michaelmas term of year one, and work on it throughout the whole of first year, and Michaelmas and Hilary terms of year two.

The faculty's research is organised around historical periods, research centres, or in collaborative and individual research projects, and graduates are key participants in the wide range of seminars, workshops and conferences run by the Faculty of History.

The Oxford Centre for Research in the Humanities (TORCH) offers a stimulating range of interdisciplinary activities. You are also encouraged to join the Oxford History Graduate Network (OHGN), which fosters friendships, conversations and collaboration.

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.

You are also able to draw on the specialist resources offered by the Bodleian History Faculty Library which provides dedicated support and training courses for all graduates. They also have access to the many college libraries and to college archives which can house significant collections of personal papers as well as institutional records dating back to the middle ages.

Supervision

The allocation of graduate supervision for this course is the responsibility of the Faculty of History and it is not always possible to accommodate the preferences of incoming graduate students to work with a particular member of staff. Offers will only be made if appropriate supervision is available.

It is usual practice that MPhil students have one supervisor, but a co-supervisor will be appointed if additional specialist knowledge is required. For degrees in Economic and Social History, one supervisor must be a full member of the Faculty of History or the Department of Economics.

Your supervisor(s) is there to provide advice, guidance, and support throughout your MPhil. You should arrange to meet your supervisor(s) early in your first term to establish a clear framework for your research and writing, and identify any skills training needed to undertake your research. There is no set timetable for the frequency of future meetings, but it is recommended that you arrange to meet your supervisor several times a term in both years, to discuss progress of your research and writing. You should also agree a timetable for the submission and return of drafts of your dissertation.

Assessment

The first core course, What happened and Why, is evaluated by an essay submitted in Hilary term of year one.

The second core course, Quantitative Methods, is evaluated by assignment, submitted in Hilary term of year one.

Assessment of the four advanced papers varies, but is usually by timed examination, or by submitted extended essay.

The research project is examined by a 30,000-word dissertation, submitted at the beginning of Trinity term in the second year of the course.

All MSc students and first-year MPhil students in Economic and Social History are required to make a presentation of their dissertation research at the Annual Graduate Workshop in Economic and Social History held in the first week of the Trinity term.

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	£16,900
Overseas	£41,250

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>).