

Course Information Sheet for entry in 2025-26: MPhil in Traditional East Asia



Course facts

Mode of study	Full Time Only
Expected length	21 months

About the course

The MPhil in Traditional East Asia examines the Sinitic tradition and its development and adaptations in China, Korea, and Japan. It will appeal to students wishing to develop an intimate knowledge of the region.

On arrival, students are required to have proficiency in at least one East Asian language (Chinese, Korean, or Japanese).

First year

Your first-year work has three parts.

Modern Language

You should have some proficiency in an East Asian language (Chinese, Korean, or Japanese). A qualifying examination in your modern language is held at the end of the third term. If your proficiency in your main language is not up to academic standards, you will prepare for an examination in that language. If, on arrival, your proficiency is judged to be up to academic standards, you will choose a different modern East Asian language for research purposes and prepare for the examination in the selected language.

Classical Language

You will be required to follow a general course in Classical Chinese, Classical Japanese, or Middle Korean. Instruction may take the form of lectures, text classes, or some combination of the two. You will prepare and present English translations in text classes. Depending on your ability, you may be permitted to follow more than one classical language, but you must choose only one classical language for assessment in your qualifying examination.

Colloquium

You will also attend throughout the year the East Asia Colloquium, for which you receive a reading list and write four essays per term. Students meet every two weeks in a 90-minute seminar to present a summary of their essays and discuss the topic at hand. The qualifying examination for the seminar consists of an assessment of your three best essays from the twelve prepared over the year. No marks are given on each essay but you will receive comments and feedback, and you must choose and submit one essay to Examination Schools at the end of each term that you feel presents the best of your work.

Second year

Your second-year work has three parts.

Thesis

In the second year, you will spend a good portion of your time researching and writing your thesis. There are no modern language requirements, but you may opt to monitor or audit classes in a modern or classical language that you were unable to study or for which you would like further study.

Prescribed Texts

You will continue your study of a classical language by reading Prescribed Texts in Classical Chinese or Classical Japanese or Middle Korean. Texts are chosen in consultation with one of the Course Coordinators and drawn from canonical literature in the areas of history, literature, and philosophy. The final examination is a timed examination at the end of the second year. You have eight one-hour classes spread over three terms.

Bibliography and Methodology

For the Bibliography and Methodology requirement, you will choose a country specialisation (Korea, China, or Japan) and prepare answers to a series of exercises requiring you to find specific and general information in the classical bibliography and references of one of the three countries. You have eight one-hour classes spread over three terms.

Handwriting as a competence standard

Mastering the ability to handwrite in Korean, Japanese and Chinese has been identified as a competence standard for a mandatory core element of this course. This means that students will be required to produce handwritten work for assessment and it will not be possible to complete the assessment in an alternative format.

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.

Oxford's libraries have a large collection on materials on East Asia. For Chinese, Korean, and Japanese, the Bodleian Chinese Library in the Dickson Poon University of Oxford China Centre, the Bodleian Japanese Library in the Nissan Institute, and the 'Window on Korea' Library in the Nizami Ganjavi Library in the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies are most useful, together with the Eastern Art Library in the Bodleian Art, Archaeology and Ancient World Library.

For Chinese, there is also the Dickson Poon University of Oxford China Centre Building (hereafter China Centre) which has a dedicated library. The China Centre Library holds books from the Bodleian Library's China Collection. The Bodleian Library has been collecting books in Chinese and on China since the early seventeenth century and presently contains one of the largest collections in Europe.

The 'Window on Korea' project - sponsored by the National Library of Korea - has provided the Bodleian Library with many volumes and provides around 200 volumes per year. The National Library of Korea also provided funding to help create a Korean Studies Library. This has expanded the collection as well as bringing all necessary Korean materials (reference, newspapers, teaching, audio visual and research materials) into one location at the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies.

The Weston Library houses the Korean collection of pre-modern books and manuscripts and the Bodleian intranet system maintains subscriptions to most of the key online databases, eg DBpia, KISS, KRpia and KSI e-book. The Korean collection possesses the Bishop Mark Trollope Collection (from the nineteenth century and earlier), the Monsignor Richard Rutt Collection (mid to late twentieth century), and the earliest translations of the New Testament into Korean by John Ross in the 1880s.

For Japanese, the Nissan Institute houses the Bodleian Japanese Library, the University's research collection of Japanese books. The first known accession of Japanese printed material was three volumes printed by Hon'ami Kōetsu's press at Saga, Kyoto, c.1608-15.

There are also rare printed volumes produced by the Jesuit press in Japan (Kirishitan-ban) before they were expelled in 1614 as well as log books by William Adams (1564-1620), the first Englishman known to have visited Japan. The collection grew with Western-language publications on Japan from the seventeenth century onwards, and as an active research library serving the Oxford community, there is also an extensive and expanding modern collection.

There is also the Research Centre for Japanese Language and Linguistics in the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, which functions as an umbrella for research activities related to Japanese language and linguistics through the University. The centre serves as a forum for publicising teaching, lectures, seminars, and other activities of interest to Japanese linguistics, and as a point of access to information for prospective graduate students interested in Japanese language and linguistics.

Adjacent to the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies is the Ashmolean Museum, which houses superb Chinese, Japanese and Korean collections, and the Bodleian Art, Archaeology and Ancient World Library, which houses an extensive collection on the art history of East Asia.

You will have access to the University's centrally provided electronic resources, the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies' IT Officer, and other bibliographic, archive or material sources as appropriate to the topic. There is a computing room for the use of graduate students in the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, as well as a common room where tea and coffee are available and staff, and students can meet.

Supervision

The allocation of graduate supervision for this course is the responsibility of the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies 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 Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies.

Assessment

In the first year, you will take two examinations at the end of the third term. One will be in a modern language. The second will be in a classical language.

You will also be assessed on three essays from the first, second, and third terms of your first year.

In the second year, you will prepare a thesis of using information gathered through at least one East Asian language. You will present your interim research results at one public colloquium held at the end of the fifth term. The thesis is due during the sixth term. The last time you are able to consult your supervisor for the thesis is one month before the due date.

At the end of the sixth term, you will sit one examination on the Prescribed Texts you have prepared in your chosen classical language, and you will be given a take-home examination to assess your knowledge of classical Bibliography and Methodology in your chosen field (Korea, Japan, or China).

Further information on the course, and the examination process, can be found in the course handbook via the course webpage on the faculty's website.

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	£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>).