

Course Information Sheet for entry in 2025-26: MPhil in Classical Indian Religion



Course facts

Mode of study	Full Time Only
Expected length	21 months

About the course

This course introduces you to the religions of India whose literature has been expressed primarily in Sanskrit and the Middle Indic languages, especially Prakrit and Pali. The course provides an overview through the study of original sources in Sanskrit, as well as the opportunity to choose two Indian religious traditions in which to specialise.

The course is intended for those wishing to begin a new field of study at the graduate level or wishing to add a second field. It can also serve as a preparation for careers in the arts, libraries, journalism, diplomacy, law, government service, non-governmental organisations, or secondary school education.

In the first part of the course, lasting five months, you will make an intensive study of the essentials of the Sanskrit language. There will be daily homework exercises as well as memorisation of aspects of Sanskrit grammar and vocabulary. At the same time you will attend a class on methods in the study of classical Indian culture, attend lectures and seminars, and write several tutorial essays related to general themes in Indian religion.

Following successful qualifying examination at the end of the first year, you will enter the second part of the course, which continues to the end of the second year. You will have regular classes in reading Sanskrit texts. For these classes you will prepare texts in advance and, along with your classmates, will read and translate them into English. Your classes will cover prescribed lists of texts that belong to two Indian religious traditions, which you will have chosen from among five options:

- Shaivism
- Vaishnavism
- Buddhism
- Yoga
- The mainstream tradition that derives from the Vedas.

It may also be possible to choose other options subject to availability. You will also be given tutorials in these two traditions, for which you will read assigned secondary sources and prepare essays to discuss with your tutors.

There are also lectures and seminars regularly offered. Students who come to Oxford with a significant background in Sanskrit may with permission attend advanced classes, or other language classes offered at Oxford, though they will not be explicitly examined in these languages.

You will be encouraged to attend lectures both in the faculty and elsewhere in the University, as your work permits and your interests dictate.

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 is home to an outstanding range of library and museum collections that provide invaluable resources for the study of India.

The Bodleian Library houses one of the largest and most significant collections of Sanskrit manuscripts in the world, outside of India. The Indian Institute Library, now housed in the Weston Library, holds more than 130,000 titles, one of the most substantial collections of books for South Asian studies available in the UK. The Weston Library also houses the Bodleian's Special Collections, including its Sanskrit and Tibetan manuscripts.

Open-stack access to the research core of the Indian Institute collection is available through the Charles Wendell Davis Reading Room, located on the top floor of the Weston, with commanding views of Oxford's old academic quarter.

There are also extensive collections pertaining to India in the Nizami Ganjavi Library at the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, the Bodleian Art, Archaeology and Ancient World Library, and several of the colleges (especially Balliol, Wolfson, and St Antony's). The Bodleian Law Library has extensive holdings related to law in India, with a primary focus on the laws of the Indian republic, rather than pre-1947 colonial legislation. The Indian collections of the Ashmolean Museum are of international importance, and its coins, paintings, prints and textiles offer wider insights into some of the formative cultural influences operating in the subcontinent in the centuries when its modern languages were emerging. The Museum of the History of Science has a unique collection of Indian scientific instruments, and the Pitt Rivers Museum comprises a collection of well over 15,000 items, covering most aspects of the daily life of Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Buddhists.

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

At the end of the first year of the course there is a written examination of your ability to translate prepared texts in Sanskrit and of your knowledge of Sanskrit grammar. In the second year, there is a timed examination in the textual component of the course. This paper has two halves, one for translation of portions of texts that you have read during the course, and the other for translation from comparable sources in Sanskrit that you have not read before in a class. There are also two timed examinations on the history of classical Indian religion, with the subject matter divided more or less chronologically. In these papers you will write essays in response to questions posed on topics covered by your tutorials.

In addition to the three timed examinations you will also write a thesis. It is usual to write the thesis mostly during the vacations, and it has to be handed in at the beginning of the final term. Tutors will discuss the choice of topic with you and supply a bibliography, and may criticise a first draft, but the final version of the thesis is entirely your own work. If you are subsequently admitted for a research degree, a successful MPhil thesis may form the basis of your doctoral dissertation.

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>).