

## Course Information Sheet for entry in 2025-26: MPhil in Modern South Asian Studies



### Course facts

|                 |                |
|-----------------|----------------|
| Mode of study   | Full Time Only |
| Expected length | 21 months      |

### About the course

The MPhil in Modern South Asian Studies is a 21-month, taught master's course, offered jointly by the Oxford School of Global and Area Studies and the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies. You will study this important region, with its rich history and its complex present-day societies, via an intensive language route or a non-language route, culminating in a substantial thesis.

The MPhil in Modern South Asian Studies is an exciting degree bringing together Oxford's wealth of expertise on South Asia in a single course. You will gain access to teaching and expert supervision across departments in the Social Sciences and Humanities Divisions. You will receive rigorous training in one of two tailored modules in research methods, and have the option to build in Hindi, Urdu, Classical Hindi/Hindavi, Persian or other language training.

You may choose to explore the social, economic and political achievements and challenges of the present-day states of South Asia, and the connections between the countries' democratic and developmental successes and failures, or to range more broadly across the states and societies of the subcontinent over the past five hundred years.

Since the MPhil is taught jointly by staff within the Social Sciences and Humanities Divisions, students will be part of a larger community of teachers, researchers and students with interests in South Asia.

For students who already have a grounding in a South Asian language, there are opportunities to proceed to an advanced level, and to develop reading skills to attain a research proficiency.

### Course structure

You will also choose between the language track or the non-language track. Language track students may take one of the following intensive courses both at beginner and advanced level: Hindi, Hindi and Urdu, Classical Hindi/Hindavi, and, if the timetable permits, Sanskrit, Persian or Tibetan. Students who are interested in any of these three 'substitute' core languages are asked to flag this interest in their personal statement.

Subject to timetabling, students with at least an intermediate or colloquial knowledge of any South Asian language also have the opportunity to take less intensive training in Hindi, Urdu, Classical Hindi/Hindavi or Persian either continuing at an advanced level or beginning a new language. Subject to both timetabling and demand, Bengali, Gujarati or Marathi may be studied either in their modern-day forms at elementary level or in their classical forms at a more advanced level. Again, if you are interested in taking Persian either at advanced or beginner level you are asked to flag this in your personal statement.

You will experience a variety of teaching modes, including lectures, seminars, classes, student presentations, and small group teaching. The MPhil is jointly taught by staff within the Social Sciences and Humanities Divisions, who will also assess your application. The application process is administered by the Oxford School of Global and Area Studies. Language teaching will be provided in the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies. For much of the course, students will work alongside those taking the nine month MSc in Modern South Asian Studies. For parts of the research methods course, students will be taught alongside those studying for other MPhil and MSc courses offered by the Oxford School of Global and Area Studies, as well as doctoral students, opening up further possibilities for interdisciplinary learning and exchange.

You will be required to gather relevant materials for your thesis during the course, usually by working in libraries and archives in the UK but potentially also via fieldwork. Required hours of study will vary between students as you will come from different backgrounds and bring different experiences to your study. However, a typical week during term time will involve around 40 hours of study, including two to six hours of scheduled contact hours (more for those following the 'language track'), two hours for the weekly seminar and at least thirty hours of independent study. In the second year of the MPhil course, the balance changes as students concentrate on the writing up stage of their theses.

Success on the course requires sustained effort across the academic year, with term-times being typically prioritised with preparation for, and participation in, course lectures, class presentations, class discussion, essay reviews, and thesis supervisions. The vacation periods are not holidays as such but instead represent extended periods in the academic year when private study and thesis research can be balanced alongside taking a well-earned break during national festivals such as Christmas and Easter. During the summer vacation between the first and second years of the course you will be expected to undertake at least six weeks' research in archives or fieldwork as appropriate.

## First year

During the first year, you will attend the core course, introducing modern South Asia across the disciplines. You will also receive training in research methods, through one of the following specially tailored programmes:

- research methods for area studies, both qualitative and quantitative
- research methods in humanities, including qualitative methods in literature, language and history.

An important purpose of the research methods course is to help you develop and refine your thesis topic.

You will also choose option papers. If you are taking the language track, you will take one option paper during the first year. If you are taking the non-language track, you will take two option papers. For a full list of option papers, please see the course pages on the department website. Please note that the options will change from time to time, and not all will be run every year.

By the end of the first year, you will have worked out a thesis proposal, and plans for field or archival work to be undertaken during the summer months between the first and second years.

## Second year

In the second year, you will attend a course on advanced methods, as part of which you will make a presentation of your developing thesis project. Language track students will continue intensive language study. Both language and non-language track students will take an additional option. The major focus of the second year will be the thesis, for which you will receive expert supervision.

## 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.

For students whose research requires fieldwork, the University offers guidance on safe and ethical approaches to fieldwork and the conduct of interviews with local research participants.

Students will have access to the libraries, study spaces, common rooms and IT facilities of the Oxford School of Global and Area Studies, and of the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, as well as to the social and networking events organised by these two university centres.

The Bodleian Libraries offer unparalleled library and archive facilities for South Asia, including one of the richest collections of official archival materials on South Asia in the UK. The main reference collection is accessed via the Charles Wendell David Reading Room at the Weston Library. Other important open shelf collections can be found in the Upper Camera, the Nizami Ganjavi Library and the Social Science Library. Students may access other Bodleian Libraries sites as necessary.

Oxford also offers a wealth of resources for the study of South Asian art and material culture. The Ashmolean Museum contains collections encompassing art from the Islamic world, the Indian subcontinent and South-East Asia. The Pitt Rivers Museum holds important collections of ethnographic material from India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Tibet, Nepal and Sri Lanka. The Museum of the History of Science houses an unrivalled collection of historic scientific instruments, including astrolabes and other instruments, with Persian, Arabic, or Sanskrit inscriptions, manufactured by artisans in India.

In addition to the faculties and departments who share in teaching for the MPhil, Oxford contains outstanding collegiate centres for study and research in relation to South Asia and its many regions, at Somerville College and St Antony's College. Research seminars at these collegiate centres are open to all students.

## Supervision

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

All students are assigned a general supervisor at the start of term, who is usually a member of the core teaching staff on the MPhil in Modern South Asian Studies. The role of the general supervisor is to guide you through your course of study. If your research interests fall outside the expertise of your general supervisor, they will assist you in identifying appropriate expertise within the university, and help you approach suitable scholars for supervision. Applicants are advised to consider the research interests of relevant faculty teaching on the course and to choose a topic where appropriate supervision can be provided. Applicants with a research interest in art history should note that supervision is only available for research that relates specifically to items held in the Ashmolean's collection.

Depending on the range of your research interests, therefore, it is possible for you to have more than one supervisor - a general supervisor who oversees your general academic progress, and a different supervisor for your thesis. Supervision for the thesis will be offered as a series of individual meetings between you and your thesis supervisor. Your supervisor(s) will discuss your progress, and answer any questions before you submit assessed work. Your thesis supervisor will read one full draft of your thesis provided it is submitted.

In the case of students who require specific help to adjust to an academic programme or to a new range of skills, the supervisor will work with them to ensure that they have additional support.

## Assessment

In order to receive the MPhil degree, you must obtain pass marks in all components:

### Language Track (first year)

1. Research Methods (comprising two assignments, one in Michaelmas and one in Hilary term)
2. Core Course Essay (submitted at the beginning of Trinity term)
3. Core Language Qualifying Assessment
4. Option 1

### Language Track (second year)

1. Core Language Final Assessment
2. Option 2
3. Thesis (submitted Monday of week 4 of Trinity term)

In addition to this, you will be required to undertake formative assessment (essays, presentations etc) throughout the programme.

### Non-language Track (first year)

1. Research Methods (comprising two assignments, one in Michaelmas and one in Hilary term)
2. Core Course Essay (submitted at the beginning of Trinity term)
3. Option 1
4. Option 2

### Non-language Track (second year)

1. Option 3
2. Thesis (submitted Monday of week 4 of Trinity term)

In addition to this, you will be required to undertake formative assessment (essays, presentations etc) throughout the programme.

## 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       | £20,690            |
| Overseas   | £30,210            |

### 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, please note that, depending on your choice of research 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. Standard travel insurance can be provided by the University. However, students may be required to pay any additional insurance premiums associated with travel to areas with an increased level of risk, and should factor this into their planning for fieldwork.

## 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>).