

Course Information Sheet for entry in 2025-26: MPhil in International Relations



Course facts

Mode of study	Full Time Only
Expected length	21 months

About the course

The MPhil in International Relations combines intellectually rigorous training in theoretical and conceptual approaches to international relations with the study of the recent history of world politics, as well as providing methodological training and personalised guidance for the production of high-quality original research.

The MPhil International Relations will equip you with the knowledge and skills you require to pursue further research and study at an advanced level and also to undertake many forms of professional work in the field. This MPhil is a very popular course, attracting students from the world's leading institutions. Entry is very competitive and students come from a wide range of backgrounds and nationalities.

The course provides an excellent foundation for doctoral work in terms of substantive knowledge of the field, methods training, and the experience of conducting original research and thesis-writing. Those continuing on to the DPhil in Oxford can incorporate their MPhil thesis into the doctorate and progress as full doctoral students. Progression to the DPhil depends on meeting defined criteria. In most years a good percentage of the class moves on to the doctoral degree.

The Department of Politics and International Relations (DPIR) works with a range of research centres and programmes, such as the Oxford Institute for Ethics, Law and Armed Conflict (ELAC), the Centre for the Resolution of Intractable Conflict (CRIC), and the Changing Character of War Centre (CCW).

Research centres actively seek to develop collaborative research activity via conferences, workshops and other academic events. They provide opportunities for you to present your own work in research seminar series. The research centres have an established and popular visitors' programme which has allowed many scholars of international repute to participate in the DPIR's research activities.

Course Structure

The objective of the course is to give you, in your first-year, a thorough mastery of the major facts, methodologies and perspectives in the field, as well as to develop research skills. This is supplemented in the second year by specialised course work on two optional subjects and a thesis.

First year

In the first year as an MPhil in International Relations student, you must complete:

- Core classes in the development of the international system and contemporary debates in international relations theory.
- Course on research design and methods in international relations, which includes the writing of a research design proposal in preparation for the MPhil thesis.
- Methods training spanning a variety of approaches, both quantitative and qualitative. This training is intended to provide the skills necessary to both critically evaluate existing work and produce rigorous original research.

Second year

In your second year you will:

- Write a thesis.
- Complete two specialist option papers. Options offered in recent years have included:
 - The Making of Modern International Society
 - Collective Political Violence
 - Strategic Studies
 - The International Relations of East Asia
 - The International Relations of South Asia
 - US Foreign Policy.

Teaching and learning

The approach to teaching comprises intensive and interactive work between you and your supervisor and course teachers, combined with a carefully planned programme of classes, seminars and lectures, as well as directed self-study.

The department convenes a weekly IR Research Colloquium and many of the academic staff who teach and supervise on the programme organise seminars, talks and conferences during term time.

Work on the thesis is individually supervised.

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.

The Bodleian Social Science Library located on the ground floor of the Manor Road Building houses the main collection for Politics and International Relations alongside a wide range of other social sciences resources.

The Politics and International Relations subject guide provides up-to-date advice and the contact details of your Subject Librarian for further support.

Supervision

The allocation of graduate supervision for this course is the responsibility of the Department of Politics and International Relations and it is not always possible to accommodate the preferences of incoming graduate students to work with a particular member of staff. Supervisors are usually selected from the academic staff within the Department of Politics and International Relations. Under exceptional circumstances a supervisor may be found outside the Department of Politics and International Relations.

You will be assigned an academic supervisor who will advise and guide you as you progress through the different stages of your MPhil studies. Students can expect to meet with their supervisor around three times each term.

Assessment

Progression to the second year is conditional on passing examinations and/or coursework in research methods as well as the core course.

At the end of the course, you will complete two option papers of your choice assessed by examination or coursework and submit a thesis.

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	£23,050
Overseas	£35,000

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 and vaccination expenses, conference attendance, 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>).