

Course Information Sheet for entry in 2025-26: MSt in Philosophy of Physics



Course facts

Mode of study	Full Time Only
Expected length	9 months

About the course

This one-year, full-time taught graduate course offers high quality graduate education in philosophy of physics and aims to provide a foundation on which you can go on to pursue doctoral work in the area. It is likely to be of particular interest for candidates whose background is in physics and/or mathematics, including philosophy graduates with experience in physics and/or mathematics who want to specialise in philosophy of physics.

The course presumes an undergraduate-level education in physics. Candidates without such a background who wish to pursue the philosophy of physics for graduate study are encouraged instead to apply for the BPhil. This course is not available in part-time mode of study and is not offered via distance learning. Please note that this course is not a research degree.

Course outcomes

In completing the course, it is expected that you will have:

- pursued a course requiring a high standard in each of the three examined elements, ie philosophy of physics, philosophy of science and an elective subject;
- studied these subjects through supervisions with an expert supervisor and via classes convened by an expert or experts in the relevant field;
- been examined on your chosen areas by a requirement to write four essays;
- had many opportunities to hear and participate in philosophy and philosophy of physics, by attending an annual Graduate Philosophy Conference, talks by invited speakers, philosophy societies and discussion groups, and especially by attending the philosophy of physics research seminars and graduate philosophy of physics discussion classes; and
- been a member of a college graduate community, associating with graduates from many countries, cultures, and academic disciplines.

Course structure

This course consists of two core subjects (Philosophy of Physics, and Philosophy of Science) and one elective subject.

Philosophy of physics

During the first two terms, you will attend the undergraduate lecture course in Intermediate Philosophy of Physics, participate in a dedicated graduate class in Advanced Philosophy of Physics, and will receive supervisions with (an) expert(s) in the field.

Philosophy of science

You will attend the undergraduate lecture courses and the graduate class in philosophy of science and receive supervisions.

Elective subject

You will study one of the following subjects:

- Metaphysics and Theory of Knowledge
- Philosophy of Mind and Action
- Philosophical Logic and Philosophy of Language
- Philosophy of Mathematics

You will attend the graduate class in the elective subject and receive supervisions.

Teaching and learning

Tuition is offered in the form of supervisions, lectures and classes. In a typical fortnight during term, a student can expect to spend around two hours receiving one-to-one supervision, around four to eight hours attending lectures, around four to eight hours attending graduate seminars, and around four hours attending the Faculty's dedicated Philosophy of Physics invited speaker series. This translates as around 20–30% of a full-time working week. Students should expect to spend the remaining time on self-directed study.

In addition to your core and elective subjects, you may also attend any undergraduate and graduate classes, seminars and lectures in and outside of the Faculty of Philosophy which are of interest to you, provided those classes, seminars and lectures are open to you.

Each term many graduate classes and research seminars are organised by faculty members in which graduate students are full and important participants. Specifically, MSt in Philosophy of Physics students become part of Oxford's thriving academic community in philosophy of physics. Termly seminars, lectures, and classes in philosophy of physics take place and some of these involve visiting speakers. There are also occasional workshops and conferences in philosophy of physics organised by members and graduate students in the faculty, and informal networks of study.

Graduate students are also encouraged to organise their own seminars and reading groups, and they also run two societies: one invites distinguished speakers from the UK and around the world, while another gives graduates the opportunity to present papers to a graduate audience.

Each year there is an Oxford Graduate Philosophy Conference, in which most graduate philosophy students participate in some way.

Attendance

The course is full-time and requires attendance in Oxford. Full-time students are subject to the University's Residence requirements.

The course has no fieldwork, industrial placement or year abroad element, but you may decide to attend conferences, workshops or research training elsewhere.

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 Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities

The Faculty of Philosophy will be based in the Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities, a brand-new building at the University of Oxford, which will accommodate seven faculties, two institutes, a new library, a large number of well-equipped teaching and seminar rooms, and performance and arts venues. Each faculty will have its own centre and social hub within a building which will also facilitate interdisciplinary and collaborative work. At the heart of the building will be a large atrium – called the Great Hall – which will be a beautiful space, bringing light into the building, and serving as a space for informal work, relaxation, meeting with friends, taking breaks, having refreshments – and much more.

The library, part of the Bodleian Libraries, will be open to all students, and will house lending collections for Philosophy. There will be 340 general reader seats, and around 80 graduate study seats – with a further 320 formal and informal study seats throughout the building outside the library.

Open-shelf lending collections will be complemented by access to electronic resources, scan on demand, and material requested from the Bodleian's Collections Storage Facility. As well as the Library's extensive staffed hours, there will be a 24/7 study space, including smart lockers for self-collect of borrowable items out of hours. Subject support is provided by a team of subject librarians.

Supervision

The allocation of graduate supervision for this course is the responsibility of the Faculty of Philosophy, 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 Philosophy.

Most students have the opportunity to meet their supervisor three times in the first term, twice with one supervisor and three times with another supervisor in the second term, and three times with their supervisor in the third term.

Supervisions are usually around two hours long, on a subject to be chosen by you in consultation with your supervisor, normally on an issue arising out of classes and lectures. You will write an essay for each supervision, and discussion of this essay will form the basis of the supervision.

Assessment

You are examined on the basis of four essays.

The core course in philosophy of physics is examined by two essays on topics that will be prescribed by the examiners. At most one essay may fall under each of the following subjects:

- the philosophy of quantum theory
- the philosophy of space, time and symmetry
- the philosophy of statistical mechanics and thermodynamics
- other topics in the philosophy of physics (previous topics have included black hole thermodynamics and the black hole information paradox).

The philosophy of science course is examined by one essay on a topic of your own choosing, but excluding topics specifically in the philosophy of physics (as specified above).

Finally, the elective subject is examined by one essay on a topic of your own choosing within the chosen elective subject.

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	£17,900
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

The Philosophy Graduate Studies Committee has a research and travel fund for graduate students to which students may apply for assistance with, for example, the costs of attending conferences or workshops. BPhil and MSt students may only apply for funding if they are presenting a paper. Probationary Research Students and DPhil students are entitled to apply for funding to attend a workshop, conference, etc, whether or not they are presenting a paper.

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>).