

Course Information Sheet for entry in 2025-26: MSt in the History of Design



Course facts

Mode of study	Part Time Only
Expected length	21 months

About the course

The MSt in the History of Design is a master's degree offered part-time over two years, taught through synchronous virtual and face-to-face teaching. The course focuses upon design produced worldwide since 1851. Students progress from a grounding in material and historical analysis to dissertation research.

This course explores the fascinating histories of objects and environments created amidst the advent of modernity. The syllabus examines a variety of forms of design and craft: graphic design, decorative arts, industrial design, fashion, design for performance and display, the designed space of interiors, the built environment and landscape.

Core themes of the course include the rivalries between historicism and modernity; local and transnational identities; handicraft and industrial and digital processes; consumption, politics and sustainability; critical debates about manufacturers, mediators, and audiences in advice literature, advertising and film writing.

The development of a framework of interdisciplinary interpretative skills useful to understanding the history of design is a core aim. By providing grounding in the analysis of the techniques and materials deployed in creating things or places, the course enables you to grapple with material evidence which enriches this distinctive field of historical research. The analysis of the historiography of political and aesthetic debates articulated by makers, critics and historians about design, its forms and purposes locates how these objects and sites embody historical memory, identity and ideology.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning takes a variety of forms in this course. Three mandatory residencies focused upon face-to-face site visits to the University of Oxford's unique museums and libraries and to collections nearby are blended with synchronous virtual seminars and workshops timed to be accessible worldwide outside conventional working hours. In keeping with the Oxford ethos, individual tutorials with course tutors and independent research are fundamental.

Core modules

- Materials and Techniques of Design
- Historical Methods
- Histories of Design: 1851-1951
- Dissertation.

Optional modules

- Modern Design and the Home
- Design for War and Peace
- Arts and Crafts Traditions: Local and Transnational Perspectives
- Design, Body, Environment
- Machine Age to Digital: Histories and Technologies.

Attendance

This course is part-time. You will be required to attend three residences in Oxford during the course.

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 Rewley House Continuing Education Library, one of the Bodleian Libraries, is situated in Rewley House. The department aims to support the wide variety of subjects covered by departmental courses at many academic levels. The department also has a collection of around 73,000 books together with periodicals. PCs in the library give access to the internet and the full range of electronic resources subscribed to by the University of Oxford. The Jessop Reading Room adjoining the library is available for study.

The department provides various IT facilities, including the Student Computing Facility which provides individual PCs for your use.

Supervision

The allocation of graduate supervision for this course is the responsibility of the Department for Continuing Education 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 Department for Continuing Education.

Assessment

Formal assessment is by means of analytical essay and dissertation writing, underpinned by informal assessment methods such as termly oral presentations by yourself to the group about your independent research.

Year 1

Michaelmas term: Materials and techniques case-study essay

Hilary term: Historical methods and sources essay

Trinity term: Research project

Year 2

Michaelmas term: Advanced paper option extended essay

Hilary term: Advanced paper option extended essay

Trinity term and summer (to September): Dissertation

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	£7,455
Overseas	£14,330

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

This course has residential sessions in Oxford. You will need to meet your travel and accommodation costs in attending these sessions. Further, as part of your course requirements, you may need to choose a dissertation, a project or a thesis topic. 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.

If you are studying part-time your living costs may vary depending on your personal circumstances but you must still ensure that you will have sufficient funding to meet these 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>).