

Course Information Sheet for entry in 2025-26: MSt in Music (Composition)



Course facts

Mode of study	Full Time Only
Expected length	9 months

About the course

The MSt can serve both as a self-contained course for students wishing to pursue more advanced studies in composition for one year or as an excellent preparation for doctoral research. Students on the MSt courses in musicology, performance and composition follow a common structure, supported by appropriate individual supervision or tuition in their chosen specialism.

Course structure

The Master of Studies in Music (Composition) introduces a broad range of current methodologies and approaches in music scholarship. The main MSt teaching and coursework is completed in the first two terms; the third is reserved for completion of assessed work.

Core seminars

In the Michaelmas term there are typically six topics:

- historical musicology
- current trends in music theory
- aesthetics
- the social and cultural study of music
- performance
- composition.

You may participate in as many of these seminars as you wish. Your first summative assessment will be a compositional exercise written in response to the composition core seminar.

Elective seminars

Each year a number of faculty members convene a series of 'elective' seminars based on their research interests, to help you prepare for your assessment essays. You are invited to attend as many of these seminars as you wish. Reading lists are sent out before the start of the courses and you are asked to prepare fully and contribute to the seminars. Most of the electives take place in Hilary term.

Recent seminar series included the following titles:

- Pitch, Amplitude, Timbre
- Brazilian Music
- Distributed Creativity in Composition and Performance
- Thirteenth-Century Motets
- Music and (Non) Religion
- Music and Race
- Gender and Sexuality in Popular Music Studies
- Music and Islamic Culture
- Beethoven between History and Myth.

Presentation seminars

Presentation seminars are held in Trinity term. Musicologists, performers and composers each prepare a presentation on their own research and are asked to respond to another student's presentation in another; further feedback on presentation skills is received from the seminar convenor.

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 Faculty of Music building includes teaching and lecture rooms, offices, the faculty's library with listening, audio-visual and microfilm rooms, a dedicated Graduate Centre, a common room, the Bate Collection of Musical Instruments, the multimedia resource centre (MRC), an electronic recording studio, computing facilities, an ensemble room, a rehearsal/lecture hall and a suite of practice rooms.

The Faculty of Music is planning to move to the Stephen A. Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities in Autumn 2025. New facilities will include:

- practice rooms, and a larger ensemble room
- three music studios
- access to the Recital Hall
- The Black Box, a technology-enabled space to use for experimental electronic music compositions, multimedia works, experimental performances, and practice-based research. The space will be riggable in various ways, including with a 56-speaker array to create an immersive sound experience.

Libraries

The University's Bodleian Library, receives every important British musicological study, in addition to acquiring most major books and editions published elsewhere; it has particularly important collections of printed sources for early music theory and nineteenth-century sheet music. Its manuscript collection contains many important sources for early English and European music, as do several college libraries.

Other significant research collections are held at the Taylorian Library (modern languages), the Bodleian Art, Archaeology and Ancient World Library and the Maison Française.

Oxford's three important collections of musical instruments are the faculty's Bate Collection, the Ashmolean Museum's Hill Collection of old stringed and keyboard instruments, and the Pitt Rivers Museum's extensive collection of ethnographic materials.

The Music Faculty Library is the University's main repository for sound recordings and holds DVD recordings of opera, film and classical music. The library's multimedia resource centre has 11 stand-alone Mac-based composition and research workstations with Sibelius 7 notation software, Pro Tools 10 audio production platform and Max/MSP audio and video modular programming language installed as standard, as well as specialist software for video editing, noise-removal, sound design, graphics editing, audio digitisation and transcription.

Schwartzman Studio facilities

The new Schwartzman studios will be available to use by Music Faculty students for their portfolio work.

Music Studio 1

Will be a professional acoustically designed music composition, production and mixing room, able to accommodate both stereo and the immersive broadcast and recording standard - Dolby Atmos 9.1.4. It will digitally connect to almost all the performance spaces in the Schwartzman building and will be able to simultaneously record up to sixty musicians directly in the new Concert Hall.

Music Studio 2

Will be a professionally designed experimental music and acoustics research space, able to accommodate many different listening formats, from stereo to Ambisonics, Dolby Atmos, D&B Soundscape and others. It will have a permanent but adjustable '3D' 22.2 loudspeaker array. The studio will contain a range of experimental electronic music instruments and will be inherently flexible by design, with connections to all performance spaces, but a design bias to working symbiotically with the Black Box.

Music Studio 3

Will be a 'trad' recording studio directly connected and adjacent to the 'Ensemble Room' and practice rooms on the ground floor. It will house a 32 channel all analogue vintage aesthetic Harrison recording console, with an array of choice

microphones for recording small to medium sized ensemble performance: from soloist to quartet, Jazz, Rock and Pop.

Supervision

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

Students can usually expect to meet with their supervisor between two and three times a term, depending on the needs of the student and at the discretion of the supervisor.

Assessment

You will submit a musical composition in response to techniques presented in core composition seminars at the end of Michaelmas term. An essay is submitted at the end of Hilary term. The final assessment includes a further essay in musicology or a further musical composition produced in response to techniques presented in composition seminars; and a larger musical composition or portfolio of compositions, at the end of Trinity term.

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	£16,900
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

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>).