

Course Information Sheet for entry in 2025-26: MSt in Bible Interpretation



Course facts

Mode of study	Full Time Only
Expected length	9 months

About the course

This course is intended to give you experience in reading a range of primary exegetical texts in Classical Hebrew, Aramaic and Syriac; help you develop research methodologies through the writing of a 15,000 word dissertation; and to provide you with a solid basis in the subject area if you are considering to go on to do original research.

Teaching for the compulsory core course is covered by a combination of lectures, seminars and tutorials covering the principal sources for exegesis of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, and select topics will be covered in Michaelmas and Hilary terms. These may include ancient Bible translations, Qumran texts, Rabbinic hermeneutics, Greek and Latin patristics, or early Syriac commentaries. They will be explored in the essays set which you will present in meetings with your tutor, either in one-to-one sessions or with one or two other students in related subjects (such sessions are known as 'tutorials').

For your other two papers, you will select two options from the following five:

- Hebrew biblical and exegetical texts
- Aramaic biblical and Targum texts
- Syriac biblical and exegetical texts
- Greek biblical and exegetical texts
- Latin biblical and exegetical texts.

Set texts in the first Semitic language (or in Latin and/or Greek if chosen) will be studied in classes in all three terms.

If required, intensive elementary language teaching in a second Semitic language followed by textual study is available in the first term, comprising two to three hours per week. Since elementary language teaching will start with the basics of the grammar, classes may be shared with undergraduate or graduate beginners in other appropriate courses (Classical Hebrew, Syriac, and Aramaic). You will be expected to attend such classes regularly, and to complete any homework set in good time. It is also essential to spend time consolidating your knowledge of the grammar and vocabulary of the languages you are studying during the university vacations at Christmas and Easter.

Most teaching for this master's course will take place in small classes or tutorials, normally given mainly by the course convenor, Professor Alison Salvesen, but also supplemented by recommended lectures, classes and seminars taught by other colleagues, such as Dr Dorota Molin, Prof. David Taylor, and Prof. Meron Piotrkowski. You will be expected to prepare the set texts in advance of each class, in order to derive the maximum benefit from the intense form of study. Numbers of students on the course are very small (one or two per year) and so teaching is tailored according to the needs and interests of individual students. Classes are sometimes shared with those on other similar courses. Teaching for certain options may not be available in every year.

You will also be expected to attend seminars in relevant areas: there are regular seminar series in Jewish Studies in the Greco-Roman Period, Patristics, Late Antique and Byzantine Studies, Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, and New Testament, as well as special lectures given by visiting scholars. An average attendance of two seminars per week in Michaelmas and Hilary terms is advisable, in line with your subject choices and interests.

You may come to Oxford with precise ideas about the subject of your dissertation, or you may have a broader interest in a particular topic that needs to be developed. Either way, you will be able to discuss dissertation ideas with your supervisor or lecturers towards the end of the first term, spend time thinking and reading over the Christmas vacation, and submit your title at the very beginning of the second term (Hilary). It is vital to start work on the dissertation early in the academic year, and not to leave it too late.

Overall, you may expect to spend 10-12 hours attending lectures, seminars, tutorials, and classes each week during term, and a minimum of a further 30 hours on self-directed study. The University vacations are also important times for reading and study, especially the Easter vacation, when you will principally need to focus on your dissertation.

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.

While studying for the MSt in Bible Interpretation at Oxford you will have access to the collections of the Nizami Ganjavi Library (which holds many Syriac books), the Bodleian Art, Archaeology and Ancient World Library (Classics and the Ancient Near East), the Philosophy and Theology Faculties Library (for patristic writers), and the Leopold Muller Library (rabbinic literature, Targum and Septuagint).

A limited amount of grant money for trips abroad (eg for supplementary language study during vacations) may be sought from the faculty.

You will have access to the University's centrally provided electronic resources and the Faculty IT Officer.

There are common rooms in both the Pusey Lane Building of the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies and the Clarendon Institute where tea and coffee is available and staff and students can meet.

Supervision

For this course, the allocation of graduate supervision is the responsibility of the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern 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 Faculty of Theology and Religion.

You will be encouraged to discuss your ideas for the dissertation during Michaelmas term and the Christmas vacation, ready for the submission of the approval form to the Faculty at the beginning of Hilary term. Most students then have the opportunity to receive supervisions of their dissertation, once they have begun the work, at least every two weeks during term until submission, supplemented with email and online contact over the Easter vacation.

Assessment

Assessment takes place at the end of the academic year, and takes the form of three examination papers (one on the compulsory core paper, and the other two on prescribed texts), plus a 15,000 word dissertation on some aspect of Bible interpretation in antiquity. The topic and title of the dissertation are chosen in consultation with your supervisor, and the dissertation itself will be submitted at the end of the fourth week of Trinity term, before the examinations for the other papers.

The first examination paper consists of essay questions for the compulsory core paper on early translations and interpretations of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. On both of the two papers chosen as options you will be asked to translate into English a number of passages from set texts and comment on points of exegetical and other interest in them, and also to answer one essay on the background or aspects of the set texts. Candidates may be required to attend a viva.

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	£23,400
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>).