UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSIONS AND OUTREACH
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Earth Sciences (Geology) Course Information Sheet for entry in 2025

Earth Sciences is the study of the planet we live upon. The broad scope and rapidly-advancing nature of the subject is reflected in the course at Oxford, which provides sound and broadly-based scientific training.

We combine physics, chemistry and biology with geology, geography and palaeontology to answer fundamental questions about the origin, development, and future of the Earth

You will be trained in the skills required for the interpretation of rock materials and geological phenomena as well as applying theory and techniques from other disciplines to the study of the Earth and the environment.

You will learn about how our planet works, and address some of the major issues of our times: from the origin of the solar system, the Earth and life, to the climate system and the fate of glaciers and ice sheets.

The diverse range of courses cover processes from the Earth's interior, as mapped by seismic waves, to the evolution of the Earth's crust documented in the rocks at its surface.

The department has an international reputation, and houses state-of-the-art laboratories and computing facilities.

Students and academic staff mix and work together. Offices and teaching labs are close together, creating an atmosphere in which students not only focus on their course, but also get a feel for the discoveries emerging from current research.

Fieldwork/work placements/international opportunities

The Earth Sciences course includes several field courses. These link closely to material covered in lectures, and convey the practice of geology, geophysics, geochemistry, and palaeontology in the field environment. This work culminates in an independent project to study and map an area chosen by the student. Many of the field courses take place out of term time.

The Department covers the costs of field classes (i.e. travel, accommodation), so that there are no additional charges for students, and provides safety and geological equipment.

Previous field courses have taken students to Scotland, Spain, Cornwall, Greece, and Bermuda, and the independent mapping projects have occurred globally.

A typical week

During Years 1–3, your work is divided between lectures, tutorials, and practical classes.

In Year 4 you have the opportunity for independent work on special topics or in a research laboratory.

Students will find that their scheduled teaching time breaks down approximately as follows for each year:

- Year 1: Lectures 55%, Practicals 45%
- Year 2: Lectures 55%, Practicals 45%
- Year 3: Lectures 60%, Practicals 40%
- Year 4: Project 50%, Seminars 50%

Students are expected to spend at least 40 hours a week studying, including the scheduled teaching, so a good portion of students' time should be spent on private study.

Tutorials are usually 2-4 students and a tutor. Class sizes may vary depending on the options you choose. There would usually be no more than around 20 students though classes for some of the more popular papers may be up to 40 students.

Other than the field courses, all teaching takes place in the department and most tutorials, classes, and lectures are delivered by members of the Earth Sciences Department. All are world-leading experts with years of experience in teaching and research. Some teaching may also be delivered by postdoctoral researchers from the department who are experts in their area of research. Postdoctoral researchers and postgraduate students from the Department will also assist in practical sessions and on field courses.

To find out more about how our teaching year is structured, visit our Academic Year page.

Course structure

YEAR 1	
COURSES Students take all courses in five parallel streams: • Planet Earth • Fundamentals of geology I • Fundamentals of geology II • Physics, chemistry and biology for Earth Sciences • Mathematics Field courses • Pembroke field course • Arran field course • Local field courses	**ASSESSMENT** First University Examinations: Theory and Practical

YEAR 2

COURSES	ASSESSMENT
Students take all courses in five parallel streams: • Earth deformation and materials • Sedimentary environments and palaeobiology • Petrology • Geochemistry, climate and carbon cycle • Mathematical and geophysical tools Field courses: • Dorset field course • Somerset field course • Assynt field course	Part A1 Examinations: Theory and Practical

YEAR 3

COURSES	ASSESSMENT
Students take a combination of core and optional papers, which currently include the following: • Natural resources • Biological and physical oceanography • Climate dynamics • Vector calculus and continuum mechanics • Geodynamics • Volcanology, igneous processes and petrogenesis • Quantitative palaeobiology • Plate tectonics • Analytical methods • Chemistry of Earth's interior • Geophysics of the deep Earth One field course, which has previously taken place in Spain and Cornwall. Independent mapping project (conducted over summer break between Years 2 and 3) Extended essay on a topic of your choosing.	Part A2 Examinations: Theory

YEAR 4	
COURSES Students choose four options (out of eight to ten), generally two in each term. These are subject to change, and currently include: • Planetary science • Structure and dynamics of the Earth's mantle • Coevolution of Earth and life • Palaeobiology • Rock and palaeomagnetism • Topics in climate science • Topics in volcanology • Environmental geophysics Field courses: optional field courses as announced each year. Previous destinations include Greece and Bermuda. Independent work: research project over 2 terms.	**ASSESSMENT** Part B Examination: Theory, MEarthSci (Earth Sciences)

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 registration. For further information, please see the University's Terms and Conditions.

Fees

These annual fees are for full-time students who begin this undergraduate course here in 2025.

Information about how much fees and other costs may increase is set out in the University's Terms and Conditions.

Please note that while the University sets out its annual fees as a single figure, this is a combined figure for both your University and college fees. More information is provided in your Terms and Conditions.

Fee status	Annual Course fees
Home (UK, Republic of Ireland, Channel Islands & Isle of Man)	£9,535
Overseas (including most EU students – see Note below)	£59,260

Note: Irish nationals living in the UK or Ireland, EU, other EEA, and Swiss nationals who have been granted settled or pre-settled status in the UK under the EU settlement scheme are eligible for

'Home fee' status and student loan support, subject to meeting residency requirements. We will contact you directly if we need further information from you to determine your fee status.

Please refer to the Undergraduate fee status pages for more information.

Living costs

Living costs for the academic year starting in 2025 are estimated to be between £1,425 and £2,035 for each month you are in Oxford. Our academic year is made up of three eight-week terms, so you would not usually need to be in Oxford for much more than six months of the year but may wish to budget over a nine-month period to ensure you also have sufficient funds during the holidays to meet essential costs. For further details please visit our living costs webpage.

Living costs breakdown

	Per month		**Total for 9 months**	
	Lower range	Upper range	Lower range	Upper range
Food	£330	£515	£2,970	£4,635
Accommodation (including utilities)	£790	£955	£7,110	£8,595
Personal items	£200	£335	£1,800	£3,015
Social activities	£45	£100	£405	£900
Study costs	£40	£90	£360	£810
Other	£20	£40	£180	£360
Total	**£1,425**	**£2,035**	**£12,825**	**£18,315**

In order to provide these likely living costs (which are rounded to the nearest £5), the University and the Oxford SU conducted a living costs survey to complement existing student expenditure data from a variety of sources, including the UK government's Student Income and Expenditure Survey and the National Union of Students (NUS).

The current economic climate and high national rate of inflation make it very hard to estimate potential changes to the cost of living over the next few years. When planning your finances for any future years of study in Oxford beyond 2025-26, it is suggested that you allow for potential increases in living expenses of around 4% each year – although this rate may vary depending on the national economic situation.

Additional Fees and Charges Information for Earth Sciences (Geology)

Students are required to undertake field work in every year of this course: two trips in the first year and another two in the second year, then one trip in the third year and one more in the fourth year. Costs for these trips will covered by the department.

You will also need to undertake a mapping project in the vacation between the 2nd and 3rd year, which for most students will involve fieldwork. The department will contribute £500 to each student, which is considered to be the minimum amount needed to do the project, probably based here in the UK. Additional funding may be available through your college. You are very welcome to go further afield if you prefer but you would need to find or raise any additional funding that you need.

Thanks to external donations, the department provides all field and safety equipment free of charge.

The department will also provide first aid kits and additional safety equipment for the mapping project, for a small deposit which is returned to you when you return the equipment.