Course Information Sheet for entry in 2025-26: MSc in Sustainability, Enterprise and the Environment

Course facts

Mode of study	Full Time Only
Expected length	12 months

About the course

The MSc Sustainability, Enterprise and the Environment addresses two pervasive and unmet challenges of our time: making the transition to a zero-carbon and environmentally sustainable economic model, whilst simultaneously enabling sustainable development for all. The course views these challenges through the lenses of finance, economics and enterprise – both public and private – whilst also leveraging the environmental, systems, and data sciences.

The MSc will equip current and future thought-leaders and decision-makers with the rigorous academic knowledge and applied skills needed to understand and accelerate the transition to a zero-carbon, environmentally sustainable economic model.

The objectives of the MSc are three-fold:

1. Develop a critical understanding of the nature, drivers and trajectories of climate change and economic development.
2. Examine the role of enterprise and its relationship to environmental and development challenges across a range of risks, technological innovations, investment opportunities and policy responses.
3. Enable students to integrate and apply their interdisciplinary knowledge, advanced methodological skills and science-policy-enterprise network to foster innovation and scalable progress toward net zero and sustainable development.

The Programme Learning Outcomes of the MSc will equip students with knowledge, skills and networks to understand:

- the nature, science and trajectories of the net zero and sustainable development challenge (NZSD)
- the scope and limits of innovation and the different roles of enterprise – public and private - in effective responses to NZSD
- the data and methods required to measure progress to NZSD and attribute impact, and a critical appreciation of data
- the economic frameworks, methods and tools to apply to measure the NZSD problem and accelerate progress towards it
- the broad range of socio-technical drivers that can accelerate progress to NZSD
- the theory and practice of sustainable finance and investment, and how to engage with sector stakeholders
- the drivers reshaping economical social and environmental relationships
- the scope for markets to spur conservation and investment.

In addition, the course aims to equip graduates with a range of person and professional skills; in particular, leadership competencies.

The course caters for – and is intentionally designed for – a wide range of life and career stages: just-finished undergraduates, recent graduates and early- to mid-career professionals. It combines directed teaching, self-regulated learning, structured engagement, formal assessment, and regular interaction with practitioners.

Core modules

The course objectives are addressed through ten core modules, two electives and a dissertation. Expand each core module title below to read a list of learning objectives:

Climate Change and Net Zero

- Define and situate the concept of net-zero and related terms
- Understand the nature, drivers and trajectories of climate change and analyse mitigation strategies
- Analyse the interdependencies between ecological, social and economic systems in getting to net zero

Sustainable Enterprise

- Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the role of private enterprise (business) as a cause of – but also solution to – social and environmental challenges
- Summarise the ideas of shareholder-primacy vis-à-vis stakeholder views of business, and relate these ideas to the concepts of sustainability; corporate social responsibility (CSR); triple bottom line; Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG); social licence to operate; legitimacy; and business ethics

- Understand and apply key concepts pertaining to business structure, strategy and organisational change
- Understand key concepts pertaining to human behaviour that explain interactions, interests and incentive drives in organisations and society

New Environmental Economic Thinking

- Identify the limitations of conventional economic models for addressing NZSD
- Integrate new thinking “outside” of conventional economics (eg complexity theory, climate science) into economic and policy analysis
- Become comfortable using analytical frameworks that capture multiple equilibria, coordination, complementarities, lock-in, path dependence, and tipping points
- Draw insights from complex datasets such as patent, social, and export networks
- Acquire the ability to go from real-world problems with these features to possible solutions

Spaces, Infrastructure and Technology for Net Zero and Sustainable Development

- Understand and contextualise disruptive drivers that are re-shaping economic, social and environmental relationships
- Engage critically with these issues through the lens of infrastructure and technology and debate the implications of glocalization and urbanization for NZSD
- Develop an applied understanding of constructive responses to these disruptive drivers

Methods and Data

- Critically analyse the role of the scientific method of inquiry in the production of knowledge and evaluate how and why scientific data is used by different actors within society
- Understand and apply qualitative and quantitative methods to measure progress and attribute impact pertaining to NZSD
- Comprehend the strengths, weaknesses and limitations of different methodological approaches and demonstrate sound judgement in selecting and applying the optimal approach to the given context
- Apply a critical lens to data and data-driven methods – including biases – and analyse how data is used in decision-making pertaining to NZSD

Sustainable Finance

- Develop sufficient understanding to navigate and critically analyse the key aspects and developments in sustainable finance and investment
- Engage critically with systems and theories in sustainable finance and investment
- Consider how to translate knowledge into strategies for effective engagement with the financial sector

Socio-technical Interventions and Sustainable Law

- Compare and critique frameworks for contextualising, understanding, and applying the dynamics of socio- technical transitions and interventions that might drive and accelerate change towards net zero sustainable development
- Engage critically with this goal through the lens of understanding the speed of transition possible in each of the socio-technical frontiers of policymaking, finance, law, behaviours and norms, and technologies, and understand their potential for cascading interaction
- Identify and constructively stimulate interventions in each of these socio-technical frontiers to drive sustainable decarbonisation, and critically analyse the strengths, weaknesses, and trade-offs of different approaches
- Engage in benchmarking and comparative exercises, through case studies, to critically analyse both successful and less successful transitions and interventions and derive practical takeaways from their example

Systems Change, Enterprise, and Innovation

- Articulate and account for the multiple-and-oft-conflicting tensions and interests between private enterprise, their stakeholders and broader economic, social and ecological systems; and conceptualise ways to mitigate tensions and incentivise behaviours toward shared value creation, concession and compromise
- Understand the interdependence between public and private enterprise (including the limitations of each and their strengths and weaknesses) in being a cause of, and solution to, NZSD challenges
- Conceptualise plausible opportunities for business model innovation and collaboration in addressing NZSD

Natural Capital, Markets and Society

- Identify the causes and consequences of institutional and market failures to value and manage natural capital
- Understand and compare different models of governing natural capital and identify strengths and weaknesses of different types across a range of contexts
- Learn and apply methods for designing and evaluating natural capital markets and institutions, whilst leveraging and integrating relevant natural science and technical knowledge
- Examine and debate case studies of valuing and managing natural capital across climate, energy, water, food and biodiversity

Water, Inequalities and Social Enterprise

- Introduce social theory and methods related to social inequalities and water risks
- Examine and evaluate methods, concepts and frameworks in the context of water-related enterprise
- Explore processes shaping global and national discourse and debates related to sustainable development goals
- Apply methods, concepts and frameworks to case study material on how water inequalities interact with natural science perspectives and water management practices

Teaching and Learning

Teaching takes place through lectures, seminars, workshops and field trips, which provide in-depth exploration of key issues. The elective modules offer a tutorial-style teaching and discussion environment in smaller groups. Teaching is delivered by core faculty from the Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment and School of Geography and the Environment - as well as from other departments across the University - and guest lecturers from enterprise, including some of the Smith School's Business Fellows.

The course is structured across three terms, following a progression from broad-based concepts and skills to increasing application and engagement.

- Nature and sources of climate emergency and development challenges, including scientific underpinnings and conceptual building blocks aimed at framing and understanding the problems and trade-offs posed by NZSD: Michaelmas term.
- Integrated assessment of potential solutions and pathways, offering applications and solutions: Hilary term.
- Implementation of knowledge and solutions through the enterprise forum and dissertation preparation: Trinity term.

Dissertation

An independent and original dissertation (15,000 words) is an integral component of the course and enables students to translate their foundational and applied knowledge to a context/challenge related to enterprise and NZSD. Training in qualitative and quantitative methods, data and research design and research skills will help you to develop transferable skills, carry out independent and original research and master methods used widely in academic and professional research.

Integrating impact and enterprise

The course aims to equip students with knowledge, skills and networks to understand and accelerate NZSD. As such, the theme of achieving impact runs through all course modules, and is integrated in a number of specific ways:

- The enterprise forum will run in parallel with the core modules throughout course. It will form the focal point for engagement with enterprise, and will give students the chance to work with enterprise from the outset and put their learnings into practice, bringing to life the key concepts explored in the core modules. The enterprise forum will include leadership skills development, mentorship, and case-based learning, as well as being an incubator for dissertations. The enterprise forum will also be a standing feature of weekly course meetings, providing a roadmap for the field trips, group projects and dissertation research involving enterprise partners
- Regular guest lectures from enterprise partners will complement the core modules, and enterprise partners will help to identify and possibly participate in dissertation projects
- Weekly business case workshops
- The course will involve practicums with partners in public and private enterprise, such as innovative workshops, hackathons and related activities
- Field trips will explore the role of enterprise in tackling the NZSD challenges. Two one-day trips will take place in each of Michaelmas and Hilary terms. An induction field trip will also take place in Michaelmas term introduction week. In addition, a field trip at the end of Hilary term will be a week-long capstone, where students will visit a selected region to connect individual companies and their supply chains in order to bring to life key concepts and enable students to apply their learning.

Research skills' training is provided in preparation for your dissertation. As well as developing an understanding of the research process, these sessions will cover such things as social surveys, data analysis and statistical techniques.

Throughout the course, field trips and visits to external organisations support the lectures and seminars and deliver valuable skills training.

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 University of Oxford has an extensive library system and the Radcliffe Science Library is the main lending service within the University for the material required for the course. The Social Sciences Library also holds collections which are valuable for you if you are pursuing a geography programme.

There is a dedicated social space for MSc students where you can meet and discuss your studies. Where appropriate, you will be able to use the departmental laboratories for your dissertation research.

Supervision

The course has an Academic Director and a Course Director who looks after the day to day running of the course. You will have a personal advisor who is a member of the School's academic staff and who provides academic welfare support.

The allocation of graduate supervision for this course is the responsibility of the School of Geography and the Environment (SoGE) 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 School of Geography and the Environment.

Dissertation supervision will equate to approximately eight hours in total per student, in line with SoGE guidelines. As such, it is likely that a student will meet with their supervisor at a minimum once a fortnight or most likely once a week. The frequency of supervision meetings will likely change depending on the stage of the dissertation that the student is at and their unique needs. Supervision meetings will commence late in Hilary Term and conclude at the end of Trinity term.

The Course Director will work closely with each student to try and match their theoretical and contextual interests with an appropriate supervisor. Regarding differences between part-time and full-time versions of the course and according adjustments to supervisor arrangements, this does not apply as the MSc is only offered on a full-time basis. For any students doing the MSc alongside an MBA as part of the 1+1 programme, any necessary adjustments to supervision will be made.

Assessment

Assessments will consist of either written examination and/or coursework which may include written and/or oral tasks. You will also be assessed on your individual dissertation, which will have been produced independently and contain original work.

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	£29,510
Overseas	£46,060

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

Most costs associated with compulsory fieldwork are paid for by the department. This excludes the costs associated with obtaining the appropriate visa required to attend the non-UK based field trips. Non-EEA nationals might require a visa in order to travel to the country where the field trip is being held and any costs associated with obtaining the appropriate travel visa is the responsibility of the student. Students will also have to pay for some meals during the field course. Furthermore, as part of your course requirements you need to develop and research a dissertation topic. Depending on your choice of topic and the field work research required to complete it, you may incur additional costs (eg relating to travel, accommodation, field assistants, lab fees and/or research visas). You will need to meet these additional costs, although you may be able to apply for small grants/bursaries 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).