

Course Information Sheet for entry in 2025-26: MSt in History of Art and Visual Culture



Course facts

Mode of study	Full Time Only
Expected length	9 months

About the course

This nine-month programme offers a unique combination of methodological depth and access to excellent primary sources for students who wish to develop and extend their understanding of how visual styles at different times and in different places can be understood in relation to the aesthetic, intellectual and social facets of various cultures.

This course draws on the established strengths of the discipline of art history in formal, iconographic and contextual analysis in the Faculty of History's History of Art Department and links them to a rigorous approach to questions of theory and method.

The course will expose you to the ways in which the subjects of visual history are being redefined on a broad base to include a much wider range of artefacts and visual media, including images and objects produced in contexts ranging from the scientific to the popular.

Teaching comprises:

- a compulsory methodology paper, *Issues in Art History*, which is taught in a seminar series during Michaelmas and Hilary terms. There is also an associated lecture series, workshops on professional practice and object-handling sessions in Oxford collections.
- one option paper, normally taught in small classes during Michaelmas and Hilary terms.

It is expected that about 25% of your time will be spent on self-directed research and study.

Option papers

For the Optional Courses available in the next academic year, please visit the course webpage on the department's website, which will be updated in October 2024 (see the *Further information and enquiries* section for further details). As an example, the options papers for students enrolled in the 2024-25 academic year were:

- American Art in a Global Context
- The Politics of Modernism: Art in France 1880-1912
- Mapping East and West: Art, Culture, Identity

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.

Intellectual life and community

The History of Art Department brings together a tightly knit community of scholars working on a wide range of periods and subjects, including associated academics working on visual culture more widely.

Students are also integrated into the wider Faculty of History, which includes scholars working from circa 300 AD to the present, and embraces an exceptionally broad geographical range. It comprises an active research community of up to 800

academics and graduate students. The faculty's research is organised around historical periods, research centres, or in collaborative and individual research projects, and graduates are key participants in the wide range of seminars, workshops and conferences run by the Faculty of History.

The department's Centre for Visual Studies and The Oxford Centre for Research in the Humanities (TORCH) offers a stimulating range of interdisciplinary activities. You are also encouraged to join the Oxford History Graduate Network (OHGN), which fosters friendships, conversations and collaboration.

The Oxford environment provides a unique opportunity to develop intellectual curiosity whilst remaining focused on one's own work without becoming blinkered - an integral part of a successful graduate career.

Libraries and archives

The Bodleian Art, Archaeology and Ancient World Library is a major research centre for the study of art history and the ancient world and the Bodleian Libraries' Special Collections Department attracts scholars from all over the world.

Graduates are also able to draw on the specialist resources offered by the Bodleian History Faculty Library which provides dedicated support and training courses for all graduates. They also have access to the many college libraries and to college archives which can house significant collections of personal papers as well as institutional records dating back to the middle ages. There are also major research libraries as well as libraries attached to faculties, departments and other institutions.

Museums, collections and galleries

Few universities in the world boast the quality and range of Oxford's collections, which provide an invaluable basis for the study of all forms of art. The Ashmolean Museum, Pitt Rivers Museum, Christ Church Picture Gallery, Museum of the History of Science, Modern Art Oxford and other museum collections – together with the wealth of architectural monuments in the city – are an integral part of studying history of art at Oxford. The department's own Visual Resources Centre is available for student use. Students have the opportunity to work closely with curators on individual objects from many cultures. From drawings by Raphael to totem poles, the range of possibilities is vast.

This range of resources for art historians differentiates the Oxford programme from others.

Supervision

The allocation of graduate supervision for this course is the responsibility of the Department of History of Art and it is not always possible to accommodate the preferences of incoming graduate students to work with a particular member of staff. Under some circumstances a supervisor outside the Department of History of Art may be nominated.

Supervisors will meet with their students weekly in Michaelmas and Hilary terms to teach the option paper, and will also offer at least five hours dedicated supervision for the dissertation.

An Oxford academic's pre-application indication of willingness to supervise an enquiring applicant is not a guarantee that the applicant will be offered a place, or that the supervisor in question has capacity in that particular year.

Assessment

You will write a dissertation under the guidance of an expert supervisor, on a topic of your choice and approved by the supervisor and the chair of examiners for the programme. The dissertation is submitted in Trinity term.

In addition to the dissertation, assessment will take the form of exams and assessed essays. For the compulsory methodology paper you will write three short essays in an examination.

The option paper is assessed through one short methodological or historiographic essay and one research project. Students receive one-on-one supervision when preparing their essays.

If you wish to apply for a doctoral programme, at Oxford or elsewhere, you will be encouraged to develop your doctoral proposal during the first few months of the course so that you will be well placed to make doctoral applications during or soon after completing the course.

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>).