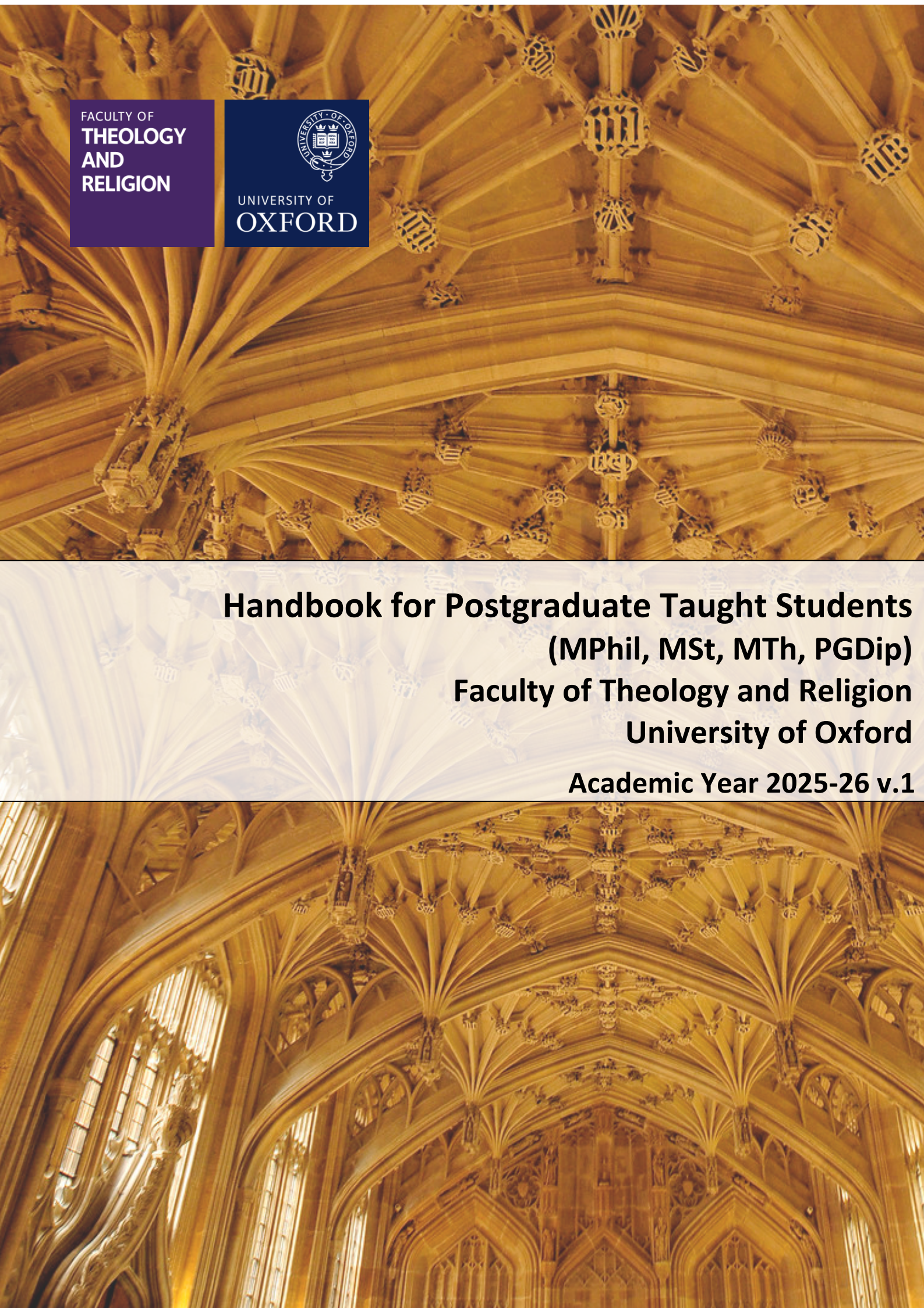




FACULTY OF  
**THEOLOGY  
AND  
RELIGION**



UNIVERSITY OF  
**OXFORD**

**Handbook for Postgraduate Taught Students  
(MPhil, MSt, MTh, PGDip)  
Faculty of Theology and Religion  
University of Oxford  
Academic Year 2025-26 v.1**

# This Handbook

This handbook sets out the basic framework for a taught graduate degree, and what to do should you encounter delays, setbacks, or need to make changes.

It applies to students starting a Postgraduate Taught course in the Faculty of Theology and Religion in Michaelmas Term 2025. The information in this handbook may be different for students starting in other years.

You should consult the current edition of the Examination Regulations for information regarding your degree. The information in this handbook should be read in conjunction with the Examination Regulations (below), the [University Student Handbook](#), and your college handbook.

1. [Regulations for the Master of Philosophy in Theology](#)
2. [Regulations for the Master of Philosophy in Philosophical Theology](#)
3. [Regulations for the Master of Studies in Theology](#)
4. [Regulations for the Master of Studies in Philosophical Theology](#)
5. [Regulations for the Postgraduate Diploma in Theology and Religion](#)
6. [Regulations for the Master of Theology \(in Applied Theology\) and Postgraduate Diploma in Applied Theology](#)
7. [General Regulations for the Degree of Bachelor of Philosophy or Master of Philosophy](#)
8. [General Regulations for the Degree of Master of Studies](#)
9. [Regulations concerning the Status of Graduate Taught Students](#)

## Disclaimer

If there is a conflict between the information in this handbook and the Examination Regulations, then you should follow the Examination Regulations. If you have any concerns, please contact the Faculty at [graduate.studies@theology.ox.ac.uk](mailto:graduate.studies@theology.ox.ac.uk).

Comments and criticism of the handbook are welcome; they should be sent to the [Director of Graduate Studies](#) (Professor Jenn Strawbridge) or [Graduate Studies \(@theology.ox.ac.uk\)](mailto:GraduateStudies@theology.ox.ac.uk).

The information in this handbook is accurate as of Michaelmas Term 2025; however it may be necessary for changes to be made in certain circumstances, as explained at <https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/courses/changes-to-courses>. If such changes are made the Faculty will publish a new version of this handbook together with a list of the changes and students will be informed.

## Student Hub

The [Student Hub](#) is an ongoing project to provide a live online version of the handbook, together with more detailed course information and further resources such as forms and exam conventions. Please check the information on Student Hub in conjunction with this handbook. You can access the Student Hub through the top bar of the [Faculty website](#). You will need to log in using your SSO.

Other key sources of information include the University's [Oxford Students website](#) as well as your college's postgraduate website.

## Version History

| Version | Date       | Change               |
|---------|------------|----------------------|
| 1.0     | 01-10-2025 | Original publication |

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# 1. INTRODUCTION TO THE FACULTY OF THEOLOGY AND RELIGION

## 1.1 WELCOME TO THE FACULTY

Welcome to postgraduate study in the Faculty of Theology and Religion, which is part of the Humanities Division at the University of Oxford. We hope you will enjoy your studies with us!

From the start of 2025–26 academic year, the Faculty will be located in the new Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities in the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter. Within this new space you will find the Faculty Office, graduate study and social space, and library resources.

This handbook is designed as a guide for students in the Faculty of Theology and Religion undertaking a taught postgraduate course in Theology and Religion, commencing in Michaelmas 2025. It provides an overview of the teaching, supervision, assessment, opportunities and resources related to your course and will be an important point of reference for you throughout your degree. Familiarise yourself with the contents so that you know what is covered here for future reference.

Please ensure that you pay close attention to email communication from the Faculty and remain in regular contact with your course coordinator and supervisors. Please also ensure you complete the Graduate Student Reporting (GSR) process at the end of each term, to ensure any concerns are shared and any successes celebrated.

If you have concerns or questions, do not hesitate to ask for help from those involved in graduate studies in Theology and Religion or at your College. The following pages will give you further details of those from whom appropriate advice may be sought. For any administrative queries, please contact [Graduate Studies \(@theology.ox.ac.uk\)](mailto:@theology.ox.ac.uk).

As Director of Graduate Studies in Theology and Religion and on behalf of my colleagues, I would like to extend a very warm welcome as you arrive to Oxford (and a welcome back for those returning for a new degree programme). I hope you will soon feel part of the graduate community in the Faculty and that your time in Oxford will be both challenging and rewarding. We look forward to working with you.



*Professor Jenn Strawbridge, Mansfield College, Director of Graduate Studies. Professor in New Testament and Early Christian Studies.*

**Professor Strawbridge** is also the Postgraduate Disability Lead and Welfare Lead for the Faculty.

## 1.2 KEY CONTACTS 2025–26

For questions and concerns, you should contact the following people:

### Your Subject Coordinator or Director of Studies

All students have a Subject Coordinator or, for Postgraduate Diploma in Theology and Religion students, a Director of Studies, designated by the Faculty Board. For postgraduate taught programmes, the Subject Coordinator may arrange for some or all of the teaching to be undertaken by others, but will still retain overall responsibility for your progress. All graduate students should, however, bear the following points in mind:

- It is the student's responsibility to keep in regular contact with their Subject Coordinator and with any tutors who are overseeing your classes, essays, and dissertation.
- You can expect to meet your Subject Coordinator at least once each term, in addition to any teaching which may be offered by the Subject Coordinator.
- You are responsible for completing your termly Graduate Supervision Report (GSR); your Subject Coordinator will respond, and the Director of Graduate Studies (and your College) reviews both reports to ensure an accurate record of progress is maintained.
- Your Subject Coordinator is also required to provide a written report on your progress, which is made available to your college, the Graduate Studies Committee and the Faculty Board. See below for further information about the Graduate Supervision Reporting system (GSR).
- Your Subject Coordinator is responsible for advising on all aspects of academic work, including attendance at lectures and classes.
- On rare occasions, students and Subject Coordinators find it difficult to work together. Such difficulties should, if at all possible, be raised with your supervisor in the first instance. However, you may also approach your college tutor/graduate advisor or the Faculty's Director of Graduate Studies, who stand ready to help.
- When a Subject Coordinator is on sabbatical leave, the Faculty Board may arrange alternative provision, unless the Subject Coordinator has agreed to continue to be available to graduate students.

### Director of Graduate Studies (DGS)

The DGS, who for 2025–26 is Professor Jenn Strawbridge ([dgs@theology.ox.ac.uk](mailto:dgs@theology.ox.ac.uk)):

- Oversees graduate students in Theology and Religion
- Can advise and point to appropriate resources and contacts for concerns about academic progress and welfare
- Chairs the Graduate Studies Committee and Graduate Joint Consultative Committee

## Graduate Studies Administrative Team

The Graduate Studies Administrative Team for the Faculty and the Division ([graduate.studies@theology.ox.ac.uk](mailto:graduate.studies@theology.ox.ac.uk)):

- Support all on-course graduate matters for taught postgraduates including:
  - Title and supervisor changes
  - Examination administration and admissions
  - In-depth knowledge of graduate policies and procedures and an excellent resource and support

## The Tutor for Graduates or Dean of Graduates at your College

Your college will have a Tutor for Graduates (sometimes the Senior Tutor), who has overall responsibility for graduate members of the college. Colleges review the progress of each student through the termly GSR reports. Colleges take responsibility for general welfare, social facilities and support services such as computing and study facilities. They may also offer help with housing and finance and are responsible for collecting fees. Your College is the first point of contact for welfare and pastoral concerns.

## Your College Advisor

Some colleges assign a College Adviser to each graduate student. The College Adviser is not to be confused with the Faculty supervisor. Their role is not to supervise the student's research, but to be a source of independent counsel, should that be needed.

## The Faculty Librarian

The Faculty's Librarian is [Dr Hilla Wait](#), and she is based at the Divisional Library at the new Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities.

## The Graduate Student Representatives

The graduate community has a number of elected representatives who organise events and work to create community, share concerns with the Faculty, and serve on the Graduate Joint Consultative Committee (GJCC) and other key Faculty committees. GJCC consists of these elected representatives, the Faculty Board Chair (currently Professor Mark Edwards) and the Director of Graduate Studies. It meets once each term in Week 4, and is intended to keep graduate students informed of developments that affect them. Following elections in Michaelmas Term, the representatives for the new academic year will be detailed on the [Student Hub](#).

## 1.5 FACULTY STRUCTURE

The Board of the Faculty is the Faculty's executive body, and consists of a number of the holders of professorial chairs, elected ordinary members and co-opted members. The Faculty Board Chairman for 2025–26 is Professor Mark Edwards and the Secretary is the Head of Administration and Finance, Tash Purple. The Board decides on most matters of policy within the Faculty, including curricular matters.

A committee of the Board, the Graduate Studies Committee (GSC), meets twice a term, usually on Tuesdays of 1<sup>st</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> weeks. GSC reports to the Faculty Board, which meets on Thursday afternoons in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> weeks. The Board appoints the Director of Graduate Studies.

There is also a Graduate Joint Consultative Committee (GJCC), which is specifically devoted to discussion of issues between Faculty and postgraduate students and building the graduate community.

The Faculty is divided into nine subject areas, each overseen by a Subject Coordinator.

The Subject Coordinators for 2025–26 are:

|                                    |                                                                  |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Christian and Religious Ethics:    | Professor Luke Bretherton                                        |
| Ecclesiastical History:            | Dr Colin Donnelly                                                |
| Hebrew Bible/Old Testament         | Professor Hindy Najman<br>(MT: Professor Katherine Southwood)    |
| Historical and Systematic Theology | Dr Phillip Moller<br>(On leave: Professor Andrew Davison)        |
| New Testament                      | Professor Markus Bockmuehl<br>(MT: Professor David Downs)        |
| Patristics                         | Professor Carol Harrison                                         |
| Philosophical Theology             | Professor Mark Wynn<br>(MT and HT: Professor Bill Wood)          |
| Science and Religion               | Professor Mark Harris                                            |
| Study of Religions                 | Professor Frank Griffel<br>(MT and HT: Professor Jan Westerhoff) |

The main office contact for all graduate matters is: [graduate.studies@theology.ox.ac.uk](mailto:graduate.studies@theology.ox.ac.uk).

## 1.4 FACULTY AND COLLEGE

Like every other student of the University, a graduate student is a member of both a college and a faculty. The following is an overview of main responsibilities.

Colleges are responsible for:

- the general welfare and pastoral care of graduate students,
- housing
- financial support and guidance
- reviewing student reports and progress
- presentation of the student for their degree
- requests for special provision for examinations and assessments
- appeal to Proctors after examinations

The Faculty is responsible for:

- examination of your university degree
- reviewing student support and progress
- advice and academic oversight regarding your course
- appointment of supervisors
- provision of teaching and delivery of your course

## 1.5 OXFORD ACADEMIC YEAR

The academic year at Oxford has three 8-week terms: Michaelmas (Autumn), Hilary (Spring), and Trinity (Summer). Terms are named by week, and graduates often meet with their Subject Coordinator, essay or dissertation supervisors, or attend faculty events in the week before full term starts, which is called 'Noughth Week'.

Full-time students must reside in Oxford during term. Graduates are expected to engage in academic work for a significant part of the vacation periods. Oxford's Term Dates may be found [here](#).

## 1.6 STUDENT VISA HOLDERS

As a Student visa holder, there are certain responsibilities that you have, and that the University has. For example, visa holders must:

- Keep your information updated on the [Student Self-Service](#) system
- Inform the University if you get an updated passport
- Maintain regular contact with Subject Coordinators and complete termly GSR reports
- Avoid unapproved absences (the University must report these to the Home Office; this can impact your visa)

Legally, the Faculty must monitor your attendance and make sure that you are engaged with your studies. If we have not heard from you in the course of a term, you may be contacted by [Graduate Studies](#) or your College office, to check in with you. If you will be away, it's good always to keep the Faculty and your College in the loop.

Further guidance for visa holders:

- University information and outline of obligations for visa holders: [here](#).
- You can contact the Student Immigration Team: [student.immigration@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:student.immigration@admin.ox.ac.uk).
- The Home Office page about the Student visa is available [here](#).

If you are interested in staying in the UK to work after your course you will need to apply for the right type of visa permission to do so. See Section 17.4 below.

## 1.7 ADVICE AND SUPPORT

Advice and support with problems or queries that concern standard academic procedures and regulations are usually most readily available from your Subject Coordinator or from [Graduate Studies](#) or the Faculty's [Director of Graduate Studies](#). Your College Advisor or Tutor for Graduates will also be able to advise you about academic and pastoral matters (more on the latter below). Where there are any problems that might have a significant impact on your progress, it is essential that both the Faculty and your College are informed.

## 2. TAUGHT GRADUATE COURSES UNDER THE BOARD OF THE FACULTY OF THEOLOGY AND RELIGION

### 2.1 POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT COURSES

The taught graduate courses for which the Board of the Faculty of Theology and Religion has responsibility are:

The **Master of Studies (MSt)** and **Master of Philosophy (MPhil)** degrees in:

- Judaism & Christianity in the Graeco-Roman World (MPhil only)
- Philosophical Theology (with the Faculty of Philosophy)
- The Study of Religions (MSt only)
- Theology: Biblical Interpretation (MSt only)
- Theology: Christian Doctrine (further divided into several sections)
- Theology: Christian Ethics
- Theology: Ecclesiastical History (further divided into several sections)
- Theology: New Testament
- Theology: Old Testament
- Theology: Science and Religion (MSt only)

Additionally, the Faculty offers the:

- Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip) in Theology and Religion
- Master of Theology (MTh) in Applied Theology
- Postgraduate Diploma in Applied Theology (PGDipAP)

### 3. NINE AND TWENTY-ONE MONTH TAUGHT GRADUATE COURSES

#### 3.1 MASTER OF STUDIES COURSES (MSt) - OVERVIEW

##### **Master of Studies in Theology**

**FHEQ level: 7**

##### **Master of Studies in Philosophical Theology**

**FHEQ level: 7**

##### **Master of Studies in Study of Religions**

**FHEQ level: 7**

##### **Length**

A course leading to the MSt is usually expected to last nine months, full time from October to June in one academic year.

##### **Purpose**

The purpose of the Master of Studies degree is to offer specialist postgraduate education in Theology, Philosophical Theology, and the Study of Religions for able students, possibly including an element of scholarly research and writing, which may constitute an introduction to a future research degree.

Candidates for the MSt in Theology are required to follow a course of instruction and directed research for three terms and to present themselves for examination in one of seven subjects:

- I) [Hebrew Bible/Old Testament](#)
- II) [New Testament](#)
- III) Christian Doctrine. Candidates specialise in one of two fields:
  - [History of Doctrine: Patristic Theology \(c. AD 100-787\)](#)
  - [Modern Theology \(post-1789\)](#)
- IV) [Ecclesiastical History](#). Students focus on a single period and geographical area of Church History selected from the following:
  - AD 200-600
  - AD 400-1100
  - AD 1000-1500
  - AD 1400-1800
  - AD 1800-the present

V) [Christian Ethics](#)

## VI) Biblical Interpretation

VII) [Science and Religion](#)

Candidates for the MSt in [Study of Religions](#) are expected to follow a course of instruction for three terms and present themselves for examination. Assessed coursework submissions must be selected from two of the following five religious traditions currently covered by the Faculty:

- Buddhism
- Christianity
- Hinduism
- Islam
- Judaism

Candidates for the MSt in [Philosophical Theology](#) are required to follow a course of instruction and directed research for three terms to present themselves for examination in Philosophical Theology.

### Standard

The standard for the award of the degree is defined as what may reasonably be expected of a student who achieved at least a high 2:1 (67% or higher) in the Final or Joint Honour School of Theology or Philosophy & Theology, or a Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3.8 with a major in religion or theology at a good college or university, after one further academic year of full-time study. Further information on International Qualifications can be found [here](#).

### Supervision

Each student has a Subject Coordinator, whose duty it is to advise concerning the choice of subjects and on any questions relating to academic work; to direct you to the appropriate classes; and to appoint special supervisors, as necessary, to direct work on particular topics. Students are not expected to find their own special supervisors. If you wish to work with a particular member of the Faculty, you may propose it to your Subject Coordinator, although the final decision rests with the Subject Coordinator. The Subject Coordinator is responsible for receiving reports each term from special supervisors, as well as for reporting on your general progress via the [Graduate Supervision Reporting](#) (GSR).

## Assessment

Performance in the various MSt courses is assessed through a combination of written examination(s), essays, a dissertation, and a *viva voce* examination unless dispensed by examiners. Full details for each course may be found in the [Examination Regulations](#) (see page 1 of this Handbook for links) or on the relevant page on [Student Hub](#):

[Course Details for the Master of Studies in Theology;](#)

[Course Details for the Master of Studies in Philosophical Theology;](#)

[Course Details for the Master of Studies in the Study of Religions.](#)

## Delivery

Course delivery is by means of a mixture of individual tuition and occasional classes and seminars, according to circumstances and at the discretion of the organisers of the course concerned. Arrangements vary from one MSt to another. Graduates often find that the lectures specified for undergraduate courses are helpful, especially in background preparation.

For more details on each of these elements, see the [MSt Course pages on Student Hub](#).

## 3.2 MASTER OF STUDIES COURSES (MSt) - COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OBJECTIVES

### 3.2.1 MSt in Theology

#### Course Aims

The MSt degree offers an intensive period of advanced study in a specific field with rigorous training in relevant research methods. The course is studied over nine months full time from October to June in one academic year.

The aims of the course are:

- To impart understanding in depth of the distinct topics within the field of study.
- To train students in the analysis and evaluation of both primary and secondary literature.
- To teach students the art of selecting the most significant materials for their purpose and combining these to form a structured argument.
- To develop the habits of critical questioning, clear exposition and objective evaluation.
- To prepare students for further research.

In addition, within the specific streams that the MSt in Theology offers, students should:

#### I) In Hebrew Bible/Old Testament

- Acquire a literary and critical understanding of the composition, history and textual development of the Hebrew Bible/ Old Testament and related literature from the Second Temple Period (Hellenistic Jewish Literature, Dead Sea Scrolls, Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha).
- Attain a good level of reading and comprehension of Biblical Hebrew through seminars, classes and the Biblical Hebrew reading group.

- Develop competence in a variety of methodological approaches in the history of scholarship and practices of biblical interpretation, from antiquity and beyond.

## **II) In New Testament**

- Acquire a critical understanding of the historical and theological genesis of the New Testament.
- Develop strong reading competence in New Testament Greek.

## **III) In Christian Doctrine**

- Have a comprehensive grasp of the history of Christian thought during one of four periods (AD 100-787, AD 1050-1350, AD 1500-1650, post-1789).

## **IV) In Ecclesiastical History**

- Have an understanding of different approaches to the writing of Ecclesiastical History.

## **V) In Christian Ethics**

- Have been acquainted with the conceptual and methodological questions arising in contemporary Christian moral thought in its major traditions.
- Have developed an understanding of the approaches taken to moral reasoning, and to a particular topic within the discipline, by Christian thinkers from antiquity to the present.

## **VI) In Science and Religion**

- Develop a critical appreciation of key areas of debate in the science-religion field, including historical, philosophical and theological questions that are impacted by the sciences.
- Develop a clear understanding of how methodological questions are handled in the relationship between the sciences and religious traditions.

## **VII) In Biblical Interpretation**

- Be able to understand the influence of the Bible and the ways in which it has been used during the last 2000 years of Christian history.

### **Intended Learning Outcomes**

#### **A: Knowledge and understanding**

On completion of the course, students should have:

- acquired a general understanding of the field of study;
- acquired some specialist knowledge of relevant primary and secondary literature;
- developed in intellectual depth and grasp of profounder issues.

## **B. Skills and other attributes**

### **I. Intellectual skills**

On completion of the course, students should have:

- gained some specialist knowledge of a particular discipline and/or historical period, as a basis for more detailed research or as a foundation for teaching in theology;
- gained a grounding in relevant research methods;
- written a dissertation, which may constitute a basis for proceeding to a future research degree.

### **II. Transferable skills**

On completion of the course, students should be able to:

- find information, organise and deploy it, including through the use of libraries and information technology;
- use such information critically and analytically;
- consider and solve complex problems;
- work well independently and in co-operation with others;
- effectively structure and communicate their ideas in a variety of written and oral formats;
- plan and organise the use of time effectively;
- make appropriate use of language skills.

## **3.2.2 MSt in Philosophical Theology**

### **Course Aims**

The aims of the course are:

- To develop the practice of analytical enquiry.
- To enable students to acquire knowledge and understanding of foundational material and current developments in the area.
- To develop the ability to identify, understand and apply key concepts and principles.
- To enable students to reflect on relevant issues of method.
- To enable students to gain a critical knowledge of the scholarly literature relevant to their course.
- To develop skills in written and oral communication and to enable students to achieve a high standard in presenting an academic dissertation, displaying sustained argument, independent thought and lucid structure and content.

### **Intended learning outcomes**

#### **A. Knowledge and understanding**

On completion of the course, students should have:

- acquired a general understanding of the field of study;
- acquired some specialist knowledge of relevant primary and secondary literature.

## **B. Skills and other attributes**

### **I. Intellectual Skills**

On completion of the course, students will have:

- gained some specialist knowledge of a particular discipline and/or historical period, as a basis for more detailed research or as a foundation for teaching in selected areas of philosophical theology;
- gained a grounding in relevant research methods;
- written a dissertation, which may constitute a basis for proceeding to a future research degree.

### **II. Transferable Skills**

On completion of the course, students will be able to:

- find information, organise and deploy it, including through the use of libraries and information technology;
- use such information critically and analytically;
- consider and solve complex problems;
- work well independently and in co-operation with others.

## **3.2.3 MSt in Study of Religions**

### **Course Aims**

The aims of the course are:

- To introduce students to a variety of approaches (anthropological, psychological, sociological) to the study of religions.
- To acquaint them with a number of classic texts on the subject written during the last 150 years.
- To train students in the analysis and evaluation of the relevant documents and phenomena.
- To develop an understanding in depth of topics from two different religious traditions.
- To acquaint students with some of the dynamics of interactions between religions.
- To teach students the art of selecting the most significant materials for their purpose and combining these to form a structured argument.
- To develop the habits of critical questioning, clear exposition and objective evaluation.

### **Intended Learning Outcomes**

#### **A. Knowledge and understanding**

On completion of the course, students should have:

- acquired a general understanding of the field of the Study of Religions;
- acquired some specialist knowledge of relevant primary and secondary literature in the Study of Religions and in two different religious traditions;
- developed in intellectual depth and gained a deeper understanding of some of the profound issues concerning the nature of religion and the interactions between religious traditions.

## B. Skills and other attributes

### I. Intellectual skills

On completion of the course, students will have:

- gained some specialist knowledge of a particular discipline and/or historical period, as a basis for more detailed research or as a foundation for teaching;
- gained a grounding in relevant research methods;
- written a dissertation, which may constitute a basis for proceeding to a future research degree.

### II. Transferable skills

On completion of the course, students will be able to:

- find information, organise and deploy it, including through the use of libraries and information technology;
- use such information critically and analytically;
- consider and solve complex problems;
- work well independently and in co-operation with others;
- effectively structure and communicate their ideas in a variety of written and oral formats;
- plan and organise the use of time effectively;
- make appropriate use of language skills.

## 3.3 MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY COURSES (MPhil) – OVERVIEW

**Title of award: Master of Philosophy in Theology**  
**FHEQ level 7**

**Title of award: Master of Philosophy in Philosophical Theology**  
**FHEQ level 7**

**Title of award: Master of Philosophy in Judaism and Christianity in the Graeco-Roman World**  
**FHEQ level 7**

### Length

A course leading to the MPhil is expected to last twenty-one months.

### Purpose

The purpose of the Master of Philosophy degree is to offer extensive postgraduate education in Theology for very able students, including a significant element of scholarly research and writing which may contribute towards a future research degree.

Candidates who are successful in the MPhil may be allowed to expand the MPhil dissertation for a DPhil.

Candidates for the M.Phil. in Theology are required to follow a course of instruction and directed research for six terms and to present themselves for examination in one of five subjects:

- I) [Hebrew Bible/Old Testament](#)
- II) [New Testament](#)
- III) Christian Doctrine. Candidates specialise in one of two fields:
  - [History of Doctrine: Patristic Theology \(c. AD 100-787\)](#)
  - [Modern Theology \(post-1789\)](#)
- IV) [Ecclesiastical History](#). Students focus on a single period and geographical area of Church History selected from the following:
  - AD 200-600
  - AD 400-1100
  - AD 1000-1500
  - AD 1400-1800
  - AD 1800-the present
- V) [Christian Ethics](#)

Candidates for the M.Phil. in [Philosophical Theology](#) are required to follow a course of instruction and directed research for six terms and to present themselves for examination in Philosophical Theology.

## Standard

The standard for the award of the degree is defined as what may reasonably be expected of a student who achieved at least a high 2:1 (at least 67%) in the Final or Joint Honour School of Theology or Philosophy & Theology, or a Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3.8 with a major in religion or theology at a good college or university, after two further years of full-time study. Further information on International Qualifications can be found [here](#).

## Supervision

Each student has a Subject Coordinator, whose duty it is to advise concerning the choice of subjects and on any questions relating to the academic work; to direct you to the appropriate classes; and to appoint special supervisors, as necessary, to direct work on particular topics. Students are not expected to find their own special supervisors. If you wish to work with a particular member of the faculty, you may propose it to your Subject Coordinator, although the final decision rests with the Subject Coordinator. The Subject Coordinator is responsible for receiving reports each term from special supervisors and arranging for their payment, as well as for reporting on your general progress via the Graduate Supervision Reporting ([GSR](#)).

## Assessment

Performance in the various MPhil courses is assessed through a combination of written examination(s), essays, a dissertation, and a *viva voce* examination (unless individually dispensed by the examiners). Full details for each course may be found in the [Examination Regulations](#) (see page 1 of this Handbook for links) or on the relevant page on Student Hub:

[Course Details for the Master of Philosophy in Theology;](#)

[Course Details for the Master of Philosophy in Philosophical Theology;](#)

[Course Details for the Master of Philosophy in Judaism and Christianity in the Graeco-Roman World.](#)

## Delivery

Course delivery is by means of a mixture of individual tuition and occasional classes and seminars, according to circumstances and at the discretion of the organisers of the course concerned. It is usual for most or all of the coursework in preparation for the written examination(s) to be done in the first year, and for the second year to be devoted to research for and writing of the dissertation. Arrangements vary from one MPhil to another. Graduates often find that the lectures specified for undergraduate courses are helpful, especially in background preparation.

For more details on each of these elements, see the [MPhil Course pages on Student Hub](#).

## 3.4 MPHIL COURSES – COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OBJECTIVES

### 3.4.1 MPhil in Theology

#### Course Aims

The aims of the course are:

- To train students in the analysis and evaluation of both primary and secondary literature.
- To teach students the art of selecting the most significant materials for their purpose and combining these to form a structured argument.
- To develop the habits of critical questioning, clear exposition and objective evaluation.

In addition, within the specific streams that the MPhil in Theology offers, students should:

#### I) In Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies

- Acquire a literary and critical understanding of the composition, history and textual development of the Hebrew Bible/ Old Testament and related literature from the Second Temple Period (Hellenistic Jewish Literature, Dead Sea Scrolls, Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha).
- Attain an excellent level of reading and comprehension of Biblical Hebrew through seminars, classes and the Biblical Hebrew reading group.
- Develop methodological breadth in the history of scholarship and practices of biblical interpretation, from antiquity and beyond.

**II) In New Testament Studies**

- Acquire a good critical understanding of the historical and theological genesis of the New Testament.
- Gain a deeper knowledge of the milieu of the New Testament writings and/or of scholarly debate about hermeneutics.
- Develop advanced reading competence in New Testament and early Christian Greek.

**III) In Christian Doctrine**

- Have a comprehensive grasp of the history of Christian thought during one of four periods (100-451 A.D., 1050-1350 A.D., 1500-1650 A.D., 1789-modern day).
- Impart understanding in depth of three distinct topics within the chosen period through a dissertation and two prepared essays.
- Be equipped with at least one of the languages necessary for the reading of primary texts where these are not in English.

**IV) In Ecclesiastical History**

- Have an understanding of different approaches to the writing of ecclesiastical history.
- Impart understanding in depth of a particular period and of scholarship on that period.
- Be prepared for further research.

**V) In Christian Ethics**

- Have been acquainted with the conceptual and methodological questions arising in contemporary Christian moral thought in its major traditions.
- Have developed an understanding of the approaches taken to moral reasoning, and to a particular topic within the discipline, by Christian thinkers from antiquity to the present.
- Be prepared for further research.

**Intended Learning Outcomes****A: Knowledge and understanding**

On completion of the course, students should have:

- acquired a general understanding of the field of study;
- acquired some specialist knowledge of relevant primary and secondary literature;
- developed in intellectual depth and grasp of profounder issues.

## **B. Skills and other attributes**

### **I. Intellectual skills**

On completion of the course, students should have:

- gained some specialist knowledge of a particular discipline and/or historical period, as a basis for more detailed research or as a foundation for teaching in theology
- gained a grounding in relevant research methods
- written a dissertation, which may constitute a basis for proceeding to a future research degree.

### **II. Transferable skills**

On completion of the course, students should be able to:

- find information, organise and deploy it, including through the use of libraries and information technology;
- use such information critically and analytically;
- consider and solve complex problems;
- work well independently and in co-operation with others;
- effectively structure and communicate their ideas in a variety of written and oral formats;
- plan and organise the use of time effectively;
- make appropriate use of language skills.

## **3.4.2 MPhil in Philosophical Theology**

### **Course Aims**

The aims of the course are:

- To develop the practice of analytical enquiry.
- To enable students to acquire knowledge and understanding of foundational material and current developments in the area.
- To develop the ability to identify, understand and apply key concepts and principles.
- To enable students to reflect on relevant issues of method.
- To enable students to gain a critical knowledge of the scholarly literature relevant to their course.
- To develop skills in written and oral communication and to enable students to achieve a high standard in presenting an academic dissertation, displaying sustained argument, independent thought and lucid structure and content.

### **Intended learning outcomes**

#### **A. Knowledge and understanding**

On completion of the course, students will have:

- acquired a general understanding of the field of study;
- acquired some specialist knowledge of relevant primary and secondary literature.

## **B. Skills and other attributes**

### **I. Intellectual skills**

On completion of the course, students will have:

- gained some specialist knowledge of a particular discipline and/or historical period, as a basis for more detailed research or as a foundation for teaching in selected areas of philosophical theology;
- gained a grounding in relevant research methods;
- written a dissertation, which may constitute a basis for proceeding to a future research degree.

### **II. Transferable skills**

On completion of the course, students will be able to:

- find information, organise and deploy it, including through the use of libraries and information technology;
- use such information critically and analytically;
- consider and solve complex problems;
- work well independently and in co-operation with others.

### 3.4.3 MPhil in Judaism and Christianity in the Graeco-Roman World

Please consult the Faculty website for details of this degree: [MPhil Judaism and Christianity in the Graeco-Roman World \(Faculty of Theology and Religion\)](#)

## **4. MASTER OF THEOLOGY AND POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMA COURSES**

### **4.1 POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMA IN THEOLOGY AND RELIGION (PGDip) - OVERVIEW, AIMS AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

**Title of award: Postgraduate Diploma in Theology and Religion (Full-Time)**

**FHEQ level 7**

**Length of full-time course: 9 months**

**Title of award: Postgraduate Diploma in Theology and Religion (Part-Time)**

**FHEQ level 7**

**Length of part-time course: 21 months**

#### **Length**

The Diploma course lasts nine months (part-time) or twenty-one months (full-time).

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of the Postgraduate Diploma in Theology and Religion is to provide graduates from other disciplines with the central elements of the undergraduate course in theology and religion, enabling some to proceed to a postgraduate level of study.

#### **Course Aims**

The aims of the course are:

- To enable students without a theological degree to acquire a basic grounding in theology.
- To develop skills in written and oral communication and to enable students to achieve a high standard in presenting an academic dissertation, displaying sustained argument, independent thought and lucid structure and content.
- To prepare students for further reading in the field, though not necessarily with a view to academic teaching or publication.
- In some cases to equip students for teaching of Religious Studies or associated subjects at school level.
- In other cases to equip students for study of theology at Master's or Doctoral level.

#### **Intended Learning Objectives**

##### **A: Knowledge and understanding**

On completion of the course, students will have:

- acquired a general understanding of the field of study;
- acquired some specialist knowledge of relevant primary and secondary literature;
- considered the application of these skills to teaching, welfare work or the Christian Ministry.

## **B: Skills and other attributes**

### **I. Intellectual skills**

On completion of the course, students will have:

- gained some specialist knowledge of the subject as a basis for more detailed research or as a foundation for teaching;
- gained a grounding in relevant research methods.

### **II. Transferable skills**

On completion of the course, students will be able to:

- find information, organise and deploy it, including through the use of libraries and information technology;
- use such information critically and analytically;
- consider and solve complex problems;
- work well independently and in co-operation with others;
- effectively structure and communicate their ideas in a variety of written and oral formats;
- plan and organise the use of time effectively;
- make appropriate use of language skills;
- convert knowledge into performance as teachers, ministers or counsellors.

## **Standard**

The standard for the award of the Postgraduate Diploma is what may reasonably be expected of a good honours graduate from another discipline after nine months of theological study.

## **Assessment**

Performance in the Postgraduate Diploma is assessed by written examination in at least three, and no more than four, papers. Students have the option to substitute one written examination with either two short essays or one long essay.

## **Delivery**

The course is delivered by tutorials, for which you customarily prepare written work for discussion with the tutor. In addition, you must attend relevant classes and lectures whose primary focus will be for undergraduates. Full details of teaching arrangements for each examination paper can be found in the [Course Page for the Postgraduate Diploma in Theology and Religion](#).

## Seminars

In addition to tutorials, classes and lectures there will be seminars specifically organised for Postgraduate Diploma students. These will normally be two a term. Details of these will be given to you by the Postgraduate Diploma course co-ordinator.

## Graduate status

Although Postgraduate Diploma candidates make use of undergraduate lectures and classes, they are full members of the graduate community, and are entitled to draw on all the graduate resources of the Faculty and the University. Please note that there is no graduation ceremony for Postgraduate Diploma students.

For more details on each of these elements, see the [Postgraduate Diploma in Theology and Religion Course page on Student Hub](#).

## 4.2 MASTER OF THEOLOGY (MTh) - OVERVIEW, AIMS AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES

**Title of award: Master of Theology in Applied Theology (Full-time)**

**FHEQ level: 7**

**Length of course: 2 years**

**Title of award: Master of Theology in Applied Theology (Part-time)**

**FHEQ level: 7**

**Length of course: 4 years**

### Length

The MTh may be taken either full-time (residential) in two years, or part-time in three or four years. Students may transfer from full-time to part-time after the first year. Full-time students may also apply to transfer to part-time status at the completion of their first year, giving a further two years for Part II of the degree.

### Purpose

The MTh is a part-taught, part-research degree of the Faculty of Theology and Religion in the University of Oxford. The Master of Theology in Applied Theology (MTh) is designed to enable theological reflection upon experience in pastoral practice mainly, but not only, in the context of ministry in the Church.

### Course Aims

To develop theological reflection upon the practice of Christian faith, in the community of the church and in society.

## Intended Learning Outcomes

- To be able to discern the theological dimension within the social structures, institutions and relationships in which faith is embodied.
- To develop the skill of integrating Christian theology with a range of human experience in the modern world.
- To gain some sense of the appropriate use of the human sciences in relation to theological enquiry.
- To use the skills gained from the taught part of the course in theological reflection on a period of experience in a pastoral context.
- To use the skills developed in Part I of the course to write a dissertation which engages in theological reflection on some area of the practice of faith.

## Standard

It may be taken by those who hold a pastoral appointment at present, or by students who can include a period of approved pastoral experience in their course of study for the MTh.

## Assessment

Students take four units in total; two compulsory units and two optional units each assessed by extended essay. Part I requires successful completion of these four units, each assessed by means of a 7,000-word essay. Part II requires successful completion of a dissertation of 15-20,000 words on an agreed subject in Applied Theology.

## Delivery

The MTh is divided into two parts. Part I is one year of taught study when full-time students must be resident in Oxford and part-time students must attend classes in Oxford once a week. The course is offered by a number of “Participating Institutions” within Oxford under the auspices of the Board of the Faculty of Theology and Religion and its Graduate Studies Committee.

## 4.3 POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMA IN APPLIED THEOLOGY (PGDipAP) - OVERVIEW, AIMS AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES

### **Title of award: Postgraduate Diploma in Applied Theology (Full-time)**

FHEQ level: 7

Length of course: 1 year

### **Title of award: Postgraduate Diploma in Applied Theology (Part-time)**

FHEQ level: 7

Length of course: 2 years

**Length**

It can be studied full-time for one year or part-time for two years.

**Purpose**

The PGDip is a taught degree of the Faculty of Theology and Religion in the University of Oxford.

**Course Aims**

To develop theological reflection upon the practice of Christian faith, in the community of the church and in society.

**Intended Learning Outcomes**

- To be able to discern the theological dimension within the social structures, institutions and relationships in which faith is embodied.
- To develop the skill of integrating Christian theology with a range of human experience in the modern world.
- To gain some sense of the appropriate use of the human sciences in relation to theological enquiry.
- To use the skills gained from the taught part of the course in theological reflection on a period of experience in a pastoral context.

**Assessment**

It requires the successful completion of four units, each assessed by means of a 7,000-word essay. Students take four units in total; two compulsory units and two optional units each assessed by extended essay.

**Delivery**

The Postgraduate Diploma in Applied Theology consists of either one year of full-time study, during which students must be resident in Oxford, or two years of part-time study.

## 5. EXAMINATIONS AND ASSESSMENT STRUCTURE

### 5.1 IMPORTANT DATES AND DEADLINES

- Important Dates for each course may be found on the relevant course pages on [Student Hub](#).
- For the Postgraduate Diploma in Theology and Religion, see here for [Important Dates](#).
- For the MTh and PGDip in Applied Theology, see here for [Important Dates](#).
- Provisional dates for the start of exams are published in a spreadsheet on the Examination Entry website. Examination Timetables are released no later than five weeks before the start of the examination on [Timetables | University of Oxford](#).

### 5.2 DISSERTATION AND ESSAYS

Each course requires a combination of examination(s), long essays, short essays, and/or a dissertation as part of the course assessment. The specific requirements for each course are found on the course page on [Student Hub](#) and in the [Examination Regulations](#) (specific links for each course are below). Review this information carefully as mode and deadlines for assessment in respective years differ depending on stream/subject area (e.g. Old Testament, Ecclesiastical History, etc.).

***Students are to prioritise the information in the Examination Regulations, particularly if any discrepancies in information arise.***

The titles and topics of all dissertations and essays must be approved by the Graduate Studies Committee, not later than the time specified on your course page. Students are encouraged to submit titles earlier for approval.

A successful proposal will be one that is well focused, articulates a question as well as a topic, clearly sets out good reasons to concentrate on a definite body of core literature, and looks to be feasible within the word-limit. Students should take careful account of the word-limit when proposing their titles, since the most common cause of their rejection is over-ambitiousness, insufficient focus, and consequent unfeasibility.

Your proposal should include:

- **The proposed essay or dissertation title.** Please note that especially in the case of the title, accuracy is very important. Examination Conventions allow examiners to impose penalties if the title submitted deviates from the approved title even in very small ways (e.g., punctuation). You should therefore ensure that the title you provide precisely represents the title you would like to be approved.
- **250-word outline of the substance of the essay or dissertation**, explaining the focal question, identifying a finite body of core literature, listing provisional sections or chapters;
- **a bibliography of *circa* 8 items for a short essay, 20 for an MSt dissertation, 35 for an MPhil dissertation, and 25 for an MTh dissertation**, which should list the most important primary and secondary works, with which you expect to engage.

It is a good idea to draft your outline and bibliography in MS Word (or similar) and then copy-paste it into the form. Please do not add blank lines between entries on your bibliography.

The form also requires you to consider and indicate whether or not your research will require formal ethical approval. See [Faculty Guidance on Research Ethics for PGT Students](#)

### 5.3 APPROVAL OF DISSERTATION AND ESSAY TITLES

Students are required to submit [approval forms for Essay and Dissertation titles](#), found on the Student Hub. The titles and topics of all dissertations and essays must be approved by the Graduate Studies Committee, not later than the time specified on your course page.

Students are encouraged to submit titles earlier for approval. Note also that the approval process frequently involves consultation with several experts who may be busy and are not always contactable. Although every effort is made to complete the approval process quickly, it does take time. For this reason too, it is advantageous to seek approval early and to respond as promptly as you can to any emails from the Faculty Office.

**Details of how and when to submit your proposals are outlined in your individual course page on the Student Hub.**

### 5.4 POSSIBLE OUTCOMES

Your application will be received by and considered on behalf of the Faculty Board. Once your application has been considered, you should expect to receive an email from the office, copied to your supervisor, detailing one of the following outcomes.

1. The title you proposed was approved and is confirmed in the email. You should take careful note of the approved title. It should appear precisely as approved (including in matters of punctuation and capitalisation) on the work you submit for examination. Please reply to [graduate.studies@theology.ox.ac.uk](mailto:graduate.studies@theology.ox.ac.uk) to acknowledge receipt of this approval.
2. A small revision or amendment has been suggested to the title you proposed and the revised (approved) title is confirmed in the email. Normally, revisions and amendments are made in order to improve the clarity of the title, to regulate its scope (to narrow the project down to something manageable) or to make it better reflect the brief description you had outlined. Please take careful note of the approved title. It should appear precisely as approved (including in matters of punctuation and capitalisation) on the work you submit for examination. Please reply to [graduate.studies@theology.ox.ac.uk](mailto:graduate.studies@theology.ox.ac.uk) to confirm your agreement to this revised title or to indicate your intention to submit an alternative revised title for the consideration of the Committee.
3. The title you proposed has not been approved on the basis of the application you submitted. The email will offer some helpful observations and invite you to resubmit your title proposal as soon as possible to [graduate.studies@theology.ox.ac.uk](mailto:graduate.studies@theology.ox.ac.uk). You should discuss this resubmission with your supervisor.

In the third case, you would normally be expected to resubmit the application form with an alternative title. In the case of number 2), if you wish to request approval for an alternative revised title that involves only a minor change in wording and no significant change in substance, it is normally sufficient to email the suggested change, together with a sentence explanation to [graduate.studies@theology.ox.ac.uk](mailto:graduate.studies@theology.ox.ac.uk) copying in your supervisor.

It is important to note the following points:

- Approval is obtained and recorded for *titles*. The outline and bibliography perform a useful function in enabling academics to understand the nature and gauge the viability of your thesis project but you will not be held to account for the outline and indicative bibliography you submitted as part of your request for approval at any later point. If ultimately you read different books or adopted a different approach in order to address the same title, you will not be penalised and you do not need to inform or seek approval from the Faculty Board.
- Departure from approved titles, however, may be penalised by the examiners according to the tariff set out in your Examination Conventions. Moreover, when marking your work, examiners will attend to the incisiveness of your engagement with the research question you have set yourself and the relevance of what you write to what you set out to do. If you discover that your approved title no longer represents the research you are doing and work you are likely to submit, you should consider seeking approval for a revision to your title. You must do this at least 4 weeks before you submit (see 5.6 below)

## 5.5 WORD LIMITS

Your submissions should not exceed the word limit given in your Examination Regulations and rubrics. The word count includes text and footnotes/endnotes but excludes appendices and bibliography. Note that permission for the use of an appendix must be granted by the Graduate Studies Committee. See the guidance on Appendices below.

## 5.6 APPLYING FOR CHANGES TO YOUR APPROVED TITLE OR A NEW TITLE

In certain circumstances you may wish to make minor changes to the title of your dissertation as your research evolves. Applications to change your approved title or for a wholly new approved title can be made at any time prior to submission of the thesis, as many times as is necessary and without penalty - **but the request may be made no later than four weeks before the submission deadline.**

**If you submit an essay or dissertation with a different title to the one approved, your final mark may be subject to a penalty. Please check your specific course page for the deadline for title changes.**

1. If you are an MSt or MPhil student and wish to make a change to an essay or dissertation title once it has been approved by the Graduate Studies Committee, you should agree any such changes with the subject coordinator or your supervisor in the first instance.
2. If you wish to request approval for a relatively **minor** revision to a title that has already been approved, for example a minor change in wording or narrowing of focus from two sources to one, it is normally sufficient to email the suggested change, together with a sentence

explanation to [graduate.studies@theology.ox.ac.uk](mailto:graduate.studies@theology.ox.ac.uk), copying in your supervisor. This kind of change can normally be approved quite quickly.

3. If you wish to request approval for a title that represents a substantial change of project from the title that has already been approved, you may need to resubmit the form, including an outline and indicative bibliography. The Faculty endeavours to process approvals as quickly as possible but please bear in mind that in these cases, fresh consultation with experts will probably be required and you may have to wait a short time. It is not a good idea to delay your request for approval unnecessarily.
4. Details of a substantial change must be submitted via the [approval forms for Essay and Dissertation titles](#) for checking by the Graduate Studies Committee no later than four weeks before the submission deadline. *This is the final deadline for alterations to essay/dissertation titles.*

**Request approval for changes to your approved title promptly.**

## 6. EXAMINATION REGULATIONS AND ASSESSMENT GUIDANCE

### 6.1 KEY PLACES TO SEEK GUIDANCE

The information in this section should be supplemented – and will also be found – across the following two pages:

- **Student Hub on [Graduate Examinations and Assessment](#)**  
This includes information on Exam entry, Candidate numbers, Dates, submitted work, Examination conventions and rubrics, examiner reports, and problems with completing assessments
- **University Student site on [Graduate Assessment and Examinations](#)**  
This includes information on entry, adjustments, timetables, problems completing assessment, exam wellbeing, submission, results

### 6.2 EXAMINATION REGULATIONS

Examination Regulations are the immutable framework of study and assessment of University degrees to which students must adhere. Regulations for postgraduate taught degrees in Theology and Religion include:

1. [Regulations for the Master of Philosophy in Theology](#)
2. [Regulations for the Master of Philosophy in Philosophical Theology](#)
3. [Regulations for the Master of Studies in Theology](#)
4. [Regulations for the Master of Studies in Philosophical Theology](#)
5. [Regulations for the Postgraduate Diploma in Theology and Religion](#)
6. [Regulations for the Master of Theology \(in Applied Theology\) and Postgraduate Diploma in Applied Theology](#)
7. [General Regulations for the Degree of Bachelor of Philosophy or Master of Philosophy](#)
8. [General Regulations for the Degree of Master of Studies](#)
9. [Regulations concerning the Status of Graduate Taught Students](#)

## 6.3 EXAMINATION CONVENTIONS AND RUBRICS

### Examination Conventions

Examination Conventions are the formal record of the specific assessment standards for the course or courses to which they apply. They set out how your examined work will be marked and how the resulting marks will be used to arrive at a final result and classification of your award. They include information on: marking scales, marking and classification criteria, scaling of marks, progression, resits, use of viva voce examinations, penalties for late submission, and penalties for over-length work.

Examination Conventions are agreed by the Board of Examiners each year. You will receive a copy of the Examination Conventions which will apply to your Examination in not less than one term before your examination takes place, when they will also be published on the [Student Hub](#). Examination Conventions are specific to your course.

### Rubrics

Rubrics include details of specific examinations and assessments in the Faculty and are published with the Examination Conventions. They may include: the type and structure of the examination, submission instructions, weightings of a paper/exam, time allowed, instructions on the use of dictionaries and other materials, instructions on the use of different scripts, instructions on word limits, and instructions on handwriting.

You should take careful note of the dates for submission of essays and theses laid down in the Examination Regulations, setting conventions, or rubrics. It is the candidate's responsibility to comply with these dates. The University Proctors, who have overall control of examinations, will not give leave for work to be submitted late except for cases of exceptional circumstances.

If there is any discrepancy in information, you should always follow the Examination Regulations.

## 6.4 ENTERING FOR YOUR EXAMS

You will be invited by email to enter for your examinations when the examination entry window opens. It is your responsibility to ensure that you are entered for the correct number of papers (exams) and correct options, but you can speak to your college's academic office or the Exams Administration team if you are unsure about what these are.

Guidance and advice on examination entry and how to ensure that you are entered for the correct examinations and assessments is available at:

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams/examination-entry>

## 6.5 TIMETABLE

Examination for MSt and MPhil courses usually falls within Week 10 of Trinity term.

Timetables for exams are produced no later than five weeks before the exam. Provisional start dates are provided on the University's website on [Examination Timetables](#), but these must be taken as a guide only. A personal timetable showing the dates, times and location of your examinations will be made available least two weeks before the examination starts.

## 6.6 IN-PERSON EXAMINATIONS

The majority of in-person examinations take place at the Examination Schools.

Detailed information on (a) the standards of conduct expected in examinations, (b) practical information and support for sitting in-person exams, and (c) what to do if you would like examiners to be aware of any factors that may have affected your performance before or during an examination (such as illness, accident, or bereavement) are available in the [Sitting your Examinations](#) section of the Oxford Students Website. Before you attend your examination, please ensure that you are familiar with this information, which will be reiterated in a letter you will receive from the Chair of your Examination Board.

## 6.7 ONLINE AND TYPED EXAMINATIONS

In 2025-2026, most graduate examinations in Theology and Religion will be in typed format. Typed exams are taken on Inspira. You must familiarise yourself with the system prior to taking an online exam. There are a wide range of resources to help you on the [Oxford Students website](#). See the guidance on [In-person exams on a computer](#); see also the Oxford Student Website on [On-line examinations](#) if your exams are open-book online. Online exams require you to adhere to the [University's Honour Code](#) and you must read this in advance of any online exams.

## 6.8 CANDIDATE NUMBER

A candidate number is created for examinations to ensure anonymity, and you'll find your candidate number on the Examination and Assessment Information page in [Student Self Service](#) or by looking on the top of your individual examination timetable.

For handwritten and typed exams, you will need to know your candidate number in order to complete the front of your script booklet(s). You will be able to write this information down to bring with you to the exam room. If you realise at the start of your exam that you do not know your candidate number, an invigilator will be able to assist with providing this information.

For typed exams, your candidate number will be shown within Inspira.

**Your candidate number is not your student number or university card number.**

To ensure your work can be marked anonymously, you **must not** write or type your name or student number anywhere within your exam script or exam response. It is your responsibility to ensure that you only use your candidate number.

## 6.9 SUBMISSIONS VIA INSPERA

The Faculty of Theology and Religion will accept written work for examination only by electronic submission via the University's authorised online platform, Inspera. You can log into Inspera from the [University's Oxford Students](#) website, where you will also find comprehensive information and guidance (including a video and quick reference guide) on submitting written work via Inspera. Please make sure that you consult the information on this webpage thoroughly and take advantage of any opportunities to make a 'practice' submission.

Ensure you are familiar with the [online submission process](#) **in advance** of any deadline. All summative assignments, e.g. essays and dissertations, must be uploaded to the Assignments section of the course's Inspera site by the times and dates specified on your [course page on Student Hub](#). Each submission must be accompanied by a declaration indicating that it is the candidate's own work.

### Documents related to submitted work:

[Cover sheet](#)  
[Instructions](#)

Submitted work assessments will appear in your 'My Tests' screen in Inspera **two weeks** before the submission deadline and remain open for some time after the submission deadline. If you log into Inspera more than two weeks before the submission deadline for your work, you will not find the assessment in your 'My Tests' screen. Please keep your work safe and log-in again two weeks before the deadline.

Work submitted after the submission deadline specified in the official paper descriptions will be deemed late and examiners may impose a penalty, according to Examination Conventions. Inspera will allow you to submit late but this does **not** extend the official submission deadline.

More information and training will be provided by the Faculty well in advance of any assignment deadline. Deferral is strictly exceptional and requires strong grounds (e.g. medical). There are a number of [University processes](#) in place to help you if you find that illness or other personal circumstances are affecting your assessments or if you experience technical difficulties with an online exam or submission.

All submitted work should be double-spaced in font-size 12, using a clearly legible style, such as Arial.

## 6.10 PROBLEMS COMPLETING YOUR EXAMINATIONS AND ASSESSMENTS

There are a number of University processes in place to help you if you find that illness or other personal circumstances are affecting your ability to attend exams or submit assignments. This includes the University policy on self-certification/extensions for submitted work, Mitigating Circumstances, and issues with completing online exams. Full information relating to problems completing is available on the [Oxford students website](#).

If, as a result of illness or other urgent cause that is unforeseeable, unavoidable and/or insurmountable, you will be unable to submit coursework on time or attend an exam, notify your supervisor and college academic office as soon as possible (for MTh/PGDip in Applied Theology - notify your Course Director). They will be able to advise you on the next steps.

If you experience unexpected circumstances that may affect your performance, you must discuss your circumstances with your College first as any application to the Proctors will come from them.

**It is your responsibility to take action if you experience problems.** The central University page (linked below) includes details about the different processes available. More detailed guidance including FAQs is available in the [Student guidance](#) on problems submitting work or attending an exam.

## 6.11 EXAMINATION ADJUSTMENTS

Details relating to adjustments for examinations may be found on the [University Student site](#).

You should apply for exam adjustments after matriculation and no later than Friday of Week 4 of the term before the exam is due to take place. It is your responsibility to request exam adjustments and provide any supporting evidence required. Requests may, for urgent reasons, be considered nearer to the date of your exam.

### Your responsibilities:

- Application: to initiate a request and provide evidence for reasonable exam adjustments for your exams or summative work. Your College office or disability advisor can advise on reasonable adjustments and what information you will need to provide to support an application for those adjustments to be considered.
- Contact the [Disability Advisory Service](#) who offer a range of services to you in your studies and assess requirements. They can provide a Student Support Plan, which may be used in evidence for an application for adjustments.
- Deadline: to request adjustments as soon as possible in the academic year to allow your adjustments to be factored into your exam timetable (no later than Friday of Week 4 the term BEFORE your exam/s will take place. Please note Week 9 of Trinity term is still considered to be part of Trinity term, so any applications for exams in that week should be submitted by Week 4 of Hilary term).
- Trial arrangements: it is strongly recommended that you trial your exam adjustments ahead of sitting your exams. This can be arranged with your college office for collections, by using the Inspira practice sites or by attending an [exam preparation session](#).

### Types of adjustments:

- Additional time for students with Specific Learning Differences (SpLDs) or physical disabilities/illnesses requiring extra exam time.
- To handwrite or type as appropriate to the exam mode of completion for students with Specific Learning Differences (SpLDs) or physical disabilities/illnesses that make writing or typing difficult.
- For undergraduate or postgraduate taught students with a recorded SpLD, your examiners will be informed of your SpLD on their mark sheets and referred to the [Inclusive Marking Guidelines/IMG form](#) about the possible impact on formally assessed coursework.
- To sit in-person exams in college for conditions that require this.
- Enlarged font papers for in-person exams for those with a visual impairment.
- Written instructions for in-person exams for those with a hearing impairment.
- Ergonomic or other seating arrangements for in-person exams.

- Scheduling of exams at a specific time of day or only one exam scheduled per day due to fatigue effects caused by some disabilities, or for religious observances.\*
- Permission to bring food and drink into an exam - requires a signed letter from the nurse or senior tutor in your college. Please refer to the information at [sitting your examinations](#).

\*Scheduling requests MUST have been submitted by Week 4 of Michaelmas Term in order to be factored into exam timetables.

Your approved adjustments will be visible to you in Student Self Service and your individual exam timetable (when this is published). Any issues should be raised with your college office as soon as possible.

If you have requirements that are not covered here, contact your College Office to find out if these can be accommodated.

## 6.12 MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES NOTICES TO EXAMINERS (MCE)

If you would like the examiners aware of mitigating circumstances that may have impacted on your performance in an exam, refer to the information on the [in-person exams](#) page and the [Problems completing your assessment](#) page. You should be aware that exam adjustments are intended to mitigate the impact of your particular circumstances. A mitigating circumstances should only be submitted to the examiners if you feel your adjustments have not fully mitigated the impact of your circumstances.

## 6.13 VIVAS AND RESITS

Each candidate may also be required to present themselves for an oral (*viva voce*) examination unless individually dispensed by the examiners. The viva will take place on the morning of the final exam board meeting. This date, within two weeks of the final examination or assessment due date, will be published in Michaelmas term. The viva may include discussion of the candidate's work in any of the elements listed above. You may consult the PGT Exam Conventions for further information on when a candidate may be invited to a viva.

The candidate will receive a notification via email to invite them or dispense them from the *viva voce*, which can be delivered online. We strongly recommend that you ensure you have access to a reliable internet connection and suitable environment to attend an online viva in the weeks after your final examination or submission.

Information about when resits take place can be found in your Examination Conventions and you enter for resits in the same way as the first attempt. Please contact your College with any questions about your resits.

When making any travel arrangements for the post-exam period, it is your responsibility to bear in mind attendance at the viva and when resits may take place.

## 6.14 INFRINGEMENTS FOR EXAMINATIONS AND SUBMITTED ASSESSMENTS

Please refer to the Examination Conventions for penalties for infringements of word limit, late submission, plagiarism and non-adherence to rubrics.

## 6.15 EXAMINERS' REPORTS AND PREVIOUS EXAM PAPERS

Past examination papers for all courses are available online through SOLO, in the University's digital Exam Paper Archive. Guidance for accessing past papers may be found on the [Exam Paper Archive](#) resource site.

Examiners' Reports relevant to your course are published on [Student Hub](#). It is a good idea to consult reports on past examinations as these frequently include comments on individual papers or questions, which might enable you to prepare more effectively for your examination. Reports are normally published before the end of Michaelmas Term following the examination. In order to protect the privacy of candidates in a very small cohort, it is not usually possible to publish reports on Philosophical Theology, or Study of Religions.

## 7. CHANGE OF PROGRAMMES OF STUDY

The expectation is that you will complete the course for which you were admitted, unless formal application for a change of programme of study is made to the Graduate Studies Committee. A request to change in mid-stream, either from one type of course to another (e.g. MSt to MPhil) or from one subject-area to another (e.g. New Testament to Doctrine) will be subject to the discretion of the Graduate Studies Committee. There can be no *expectation* on the student's part that a student will be allowed to do something other than the subject, degree or diploma for which they were originally admitted; such transfers are subject to a rigorous process of assessment.

Nevertheless, changes in personal circumstances (e.g. funding) or experience of the course itself can sometimes make a change appropriate. An application for such a change can be made using the Change of Programme of Study form (GSO.28). When asked to approve such a change, the Committee will consider:

- (a) whether the applicant can demonstrate the capacity to succeed in the work required for the course for which they are applying. In assessing this, their Subject Coordinator's judgement will always be important; written work will also be requested, assessors appointed and an interview held.
- (b) whether there are good reasons for the change. The Graduate Studies Committee will not consider apprehension at the prospect of sitting examinations to be a good reason. Genuine difficulties with the circumstances of examinations (e.g. of a medical kind) should be brought to the attention of the Proctors through college authorities.

The form for changing programmes of study is available with other [Graduate Forms](#) and must be completed using [Student Self Service](#) (from Michaelmas 2025).

## 8. EXTENSION AND SUSPENSION OF STUDIES

### 8.1 EXTENSION

Extensions are made through your college.

#### Requesting an extension prior to the deadline

- If you become aware that you will need more time for a piece of work, you can apply to the Proctors for an extension.
- Extensions can be applied for up to 4 weeks before a deadline. Wherever possible you should submit an extension request in good time before a deadline.
- The amount of time you should ask for must relate to the study time you have lost through 'illness or other urgent cause' and has to be supported by the evidence you can provide.
- You will only be granted the amount of time lost, not the time you would necessarily like to be able to complete the work.
- The maximum total length of extensions that can be granted for the same piece of work is 12 weeks.

#### Requesting an extension after the deadline

Wherever possible you should request an extension before the submission deadline. If this is not possible, you can apply to the Proctors within 14 days of your deadline for an extension.

The Proctors cannot consider extension requests submitted more than 14 days after the submission deadline.

If you have evidence as to why it was not possible to make an application before the 14 day cut off you may be able to apply to Education Committee, via your college, to dispense you from this requirement. A separate decision would then be made on your original extension application.

### 8.2 SUSPENSION OF STATUS

If, for good cause, a student is temporarily unable to carry out his or her coursework or research (if applicable), the board concerned may grant his or her request for a temporary suspension of status.

Applications for suspension of status should be made to the board concerned, via [Graduate Studies](#); and should be accompanied by statements of support from the relevant course director (or the student's supervisor, if applicable) and college. Students are required to suspend for one full academic year (three terms), or up to two years (six terms) if on an MPhil course.

When a student is entered as a candidate in an examination following return from suspension of status, they shall be entitled to be examined in accordance with the regulations pertaining at the time at which they received teaching for the examination, so long as the time elapsed since they were originally due to be examined is not greater than the maximum time permitted for completion set out below.

See here for details of reinstatement, course termination, and maximum time permitted for suspension: [Regulations Concerning the Status of Graduate Taught Students](#)

## 9. GRADUATE SUPERVISION REPORTING (GSR)

At the end of each term (Weeks 6–7), you will be asked to submit a self-assessment report on your academic progress through the Graduate Supervision Reporting (GSR) system, accessed via [Student Self Service](#).

You will receive an automated email when the reporting window opens, and another when your Subject Coordinator or Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) has completed their part of the report. Access to GSR for students is via [Student Self Service](#).

Students are required to complete a self-assessment report every reporting period. If you have any difficulty doing so this you must speak to your Subject Coordinator, supervisor, Director of Studies, or [Graduate Studies](#).

### Your Role

You are strongly encouraged to complete a self-assessment every reporting period. If you do not report, this will be commented on by the DGS and may limit the report given by your subject coordinator. If issues arise at any point in your degree, your reports will be key if evidence is needed to support an unexpected extension, suspension, or change of status, for example.

These reports also afford the opportunity to:

- Review and comment on your academic progress.
- Measure your progress against your programme timetable and requirements.
- Identify skills developed, training undertaken, and training still needed.
- Record your academic engagement (seminars, conferences, teaching).
- Outline plans for the next term (where relevant).
- Flag any concerns about your academic progress with your subject coordinator and the Faculty.

### Your Subject Coordinator's Role

- Review your progress and performance during the term.
- Assess skills and training needs for the next stage.
- Provide feedback on areas requiring further work.
- Comment on your progress against agreed timetables and plans.
- Flag any concerns.

Your self-assessment provides the basis for this feedback.

### Oversight

- The Director of Graduate Studies monitors all reports to ensure appropriate supervision is taking place and academic progress is being made
- College advisors are also notified of reports, including any concerns raised.

## Important Notes

- GSR is **not** a complaints mechanism. If you have concerns about your supervision, raise them directly with your College, Subject Coordinator, and/or DGS.
- If you are unable to complete your self-assessment, speak to your supervisor or DGS promptly.
- Guidance is available in the online GSR Help Centre.

## 10. SUPPORTING YOUR STUDIES

For details of student support, see [Student Life and Welfare](#) on the Student Hub.

### 10.1 PASTORAL AND WELFARE SUPPORT

Students often face personal problems, which will almost inevitably affect their academic work. If this is the case for you, you are not alone. It is entirely normal to have issues in your life that impact to a greater or lesser degree on your work. Your first recourse should ordinarily be to your College and Subject Coordinator, but in addition to them, a number of people are available, not necessarily to solve your problem, but to listen to you and advise you on where to turn to for appropriate help.

For welfare issues, in addition to talking to your supervisor, you should first contact your **College welfare team**, and if appropriate your **College nurse, doctor**, or other medical professionals, and/or the central **University's Student welfare and support services** (see [Welfare and Wellbeing](#)). You can also contact the [Director of Graduate Studies](#), and the [Graduate Studies](#) team.

Financial difficulty can often be discussed, in confidence, with your **College's senior member** responsible for graduates (**Tutor for Graduates, Senior Tutor, or Dean for Graduates**) and/or a **College welfare officer** or **financial officer**. Every college has its own systems of support for students: please refer to your college handbook or website for more information on whom to contact and what support is available.

For academic difficulties, whether or not connected to other problems, you should speak to your Subject Coordinator or appointed supervisor, and if this is not possible or desirable, your **College advisor**.

Every college has their own systems of support for students, please refer to your College handbook or website for more information on who to contact and what support is available through your college. Please let your supervisor know if you are unwell.

Your College **graduate common room** (GCR, MCR or JCR in graduate colleges) will provide both social and welfare support (often including **peer supporters**) as well as intellectual community. Within the Faculty, the officers of the Faculty's Graduate Joint Consultative Committee (GJCC) and of the Graduate Theological Society (GTS) can also provide support through the organisation of academic and social events which bring you together with fellow students.

A range of other services led by students are available to help provide support, including the peer supporter network, the Oxford SU's Student Advice Service and Nightline. For more information visit [www.ox.ac.uk/students/shw/peer](http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/shw/peer). Oxford SU also runs a series of campaigns to raise awareness and promote causes that matter to students. For full details, visit <https://www.oxfordsu.org/communities/campaigns/>.

The [Disability Advisory Service](#) provides specialist advice for students with mental health disabilities, and for students with other visible and/or invisible disabilities, including sensory or mobility impairment, long-term illness or physical health condition, specific learning difficulties (SpLD) such as dyslexia, dyspraxia or ADHD, or social or communication difficulties such as autism spectrum condition.

The [University Counselling Service](#) assists students who are experiencing psychological stress. Appointments can be made either by calling (2)70300 or by calling in person at their offices (3 Worcester Street); you do not need a referral from your GP or anybody else. The office of the Service is open Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm throughout the year, except for short periods in the vacations which are publicised on their website well in advance.

Oxford Nightline ([Oxford Nightline - Oxford Nightline](#)) is a confidential listening and information service run for students by students. Students can phone free on internal phones, or visit their office at 16 Wellington Square. Nightline can also be contacted by the University's messenger postal service. Telephone: +44 (0)1865 (2)70270.

The University also has a specialist [Sexual Harassment and Violence Support Service](#) whose caseworkers provide free, confidential support and advice to any current student who has been impacted by sexual harassment or violence. See also the University's guidance for [Supporting Students at Oxford: Preventing and Responding to Harassment and Sexual Misconduct](#).

Details of the wide range of sources of support available more widely in the University are available from the [Oxford Students website](#), including in relation to mental and physical health and disability. More detail can also be found in the University's [Common Approach to Support Student Mental Health](#).

## 10.2 FINANCIAL SUPPORT

You are expected to have arranged financial support for the course before you arrive in Oxford. The University attaches great importance to the student having sorted this out well in advance, since financial difficulties can become a chronic problem for graduates, and the University has only very limited resources to offer in remedy.

The University considers applications from students with financial difficulties during the course of their studies. Applications are generally submitted through your college. Details of financial assistance from the central University can be found here: <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/fees-funding/assistance/oxford>.

Most colleges have general funds available for special purposes (e.g. travel, conferences) for which their own members may apply. Some will contribute to the cost of producing a dissertation. Some will help fund a final, otherwise unfunded year of a research degree. Some colleges offer Senior Scholarships or Junior Research Fellowships, for which applicants in theology may compete alongside other applicants. A few offer scholarships specifically for theology. Details of general funding opportunities can be found on the Faculty's website: <https://www.theology.ox.ac.uk/funding>.

## 10.3 WRITING SUPPORT

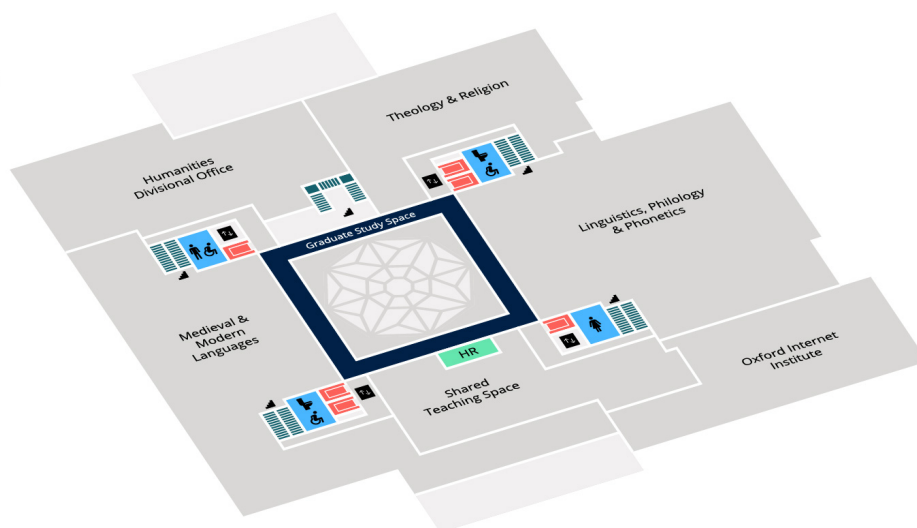
Support for Dissertation and Essay writing skills may be found within the University's [Study Skills and Training](#) pages.

## 10.4 GRADUATE STUDENT FACILITIES

The Faculty of Theology and Religion is based in the [Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities](#). Graduate students have access to a number of study areas within the Centre, including open public spaces equipped with desks.

In addition, dedicated graduate study desks are available to book through the Faculty. You can reserve one using the following link: [Graduate Study Desks](#)

- 3 Third Floor**  
 Linguistics, Philology & Phonetics  
 Medieval & Modern Languages  
 Theology & Religion  
 Humanities Divisional Office  
 Oxford Internet Institute  
 Graduate Study Space  
 Toilets ♀ ♂ ♿  
 Stairs ⬆ ⬇  
 Lift 🚪



## 10.5 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY AT OXFORD

The University of Oxford’s Equality Policy states that: “The University of Oxford is committed to fostering an inclusive culture which promotes equality, values diversity and maintains a working, learning and social environment in which the rights and dignity of all its staff and students are respected. We recognise that the broad range of experiences that a diverse staff and student body brings strengthens our research and enhances our teaching, and that in order for Oxford to remain a world-leading institution we must continue to provide a diverse, inclusive, fair and open environment that allows everyone to grow and flourish.”

As a member of the University you contribute towards making it an inclusive environment and we ask that you treat other members of the University community with respect, courtesy and consideration. Visit our [website](#) for further details or contact us directly for advice: [equality@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:equality@admin.ox.ac.uk).

The [Equality and Diversity Unit](#) works with all parts of the collegiate University to develop and promote an understanding of equality and diversity and ensure that this is reflected in all its processes. The Unit also supports the University in meeting the legal requirements of the Equality Act 2010, including eliminating unlawful discrimination, promoting equality of opportunity and fostering

good relations between people with and without the ‘protected characteristics’ of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and/or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The Equality and Diversity Unit also supports a broad network of harassment advisors in departments/faculties and colleges as part of the Harassment Advisory Service. For more information on the University’s Harassment and Bullying policy and the support available for students visit: [Harassment Advisory Service](#).

There are also a range of faith societies, belief groups, and religious centres within Oxford University that are open to students. For more information visit the EDU’s [religion and belief](#) page.

## 10.6 SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Colleges are able to provide help and special facilities.

The University operates a code of practice to provide equality of opportunity for those with disabilities. The Equality and Diversity Unit offers advice and guidance to disabled students and staff on a range of issues including disability related funding, benefits and other sources of support. The Faculty is part of the [Common Framework on Students with Disabilities](#).

Contact details of the Disability Advisory Service can be found here:

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare/disability>.

The Faculty’s Disability Lead (Graduate) is Professor Jenn Strawbridge (Director of Graduate Studies).

The Faculty’s Disability Coordinator is the [Senior Academic Administrator](#).

An [Access Guide for People with Disabilities](#), giving details about the accessibility of virtually all buildings within the University, is available. If you have a disability and require support or equipment to help in some aspects of your study, every effort will be made to provide the best solution for you. It is important that you discuss your needs with your college tutors as soon as possible, preferably prior to arriving at Oxford in order that provision can be made.

It is also extremely important that staff in the Faculty Office are made aware of any special access requirements.

The Disability Office work through a network of Disability Contacts at College and Departments in order to advise on the Disabled Students Allowance and appropriate study support needs.

Oxford University Library Services has a centre that provides support for students primarily with visual impairment but also those with specific learning disabilities (SpLD) or mobility impairment. The Accessible Resources Acquisitions and Creations Unit ([ARACU](#)) can provide texts in a range of alternative formats such as audio, digital and large print. The Disability Librarian can be contacted at, 01865 (2)83862, email [disability.librarian@bodleian.ox.ac.uk](mailto:disability.librarian@bodleian.ox.ac.uk).

Special arrangements can be made to help disabled students, including those with dyslexia, dyspraxia and other SpLDs in taking their University examinations. If you require special arrangements please discuss this with your tutors and College Doctor as soon as possible after arriving at the University.

Further information can be obtained from the [University Disability Office](#), +44 (0)1865 280459, email [disability@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:disability@admin.ox.ac.uk).

## 11. WRITING AN ESSAY OR DISSERTATION

### 11.1 CHOICE OF TOPIC

Students must carefully choose topics for work they intend to submit, particularly for the dissertation, as it requires independent research and is intended to introduce you to scholarly method in one of the different fields of theological or religious study. Therefore, the topic must be carefully chosen and narrowly focused. Care should be taken to avoid undertaking topics that are too vast to be treated in appropriate depth and within the available time for that assessment. **You must consult with your supervisor about the feasibility of what you propose for each specific essay and dissertation. The supervisor has to indicate their endorsement of the title proposal before it is submitted for consideration by the Graduate Studies Committee.**

### 11.2 SUBMITTING AN ESSAY OR DISSERTATION TITLE PROPOSAL TO THE FACULTY

See **Section 5.3** above.

Each piece of work should be accompanied by a declaration of authorship. *Please note: All submitted work for taught graduate courses (e.g. the MSt, MPhil, PGDip) should be identified BY CANDIDATE NUMBER ONLY; no names should appear.*

### 11.3 THE WRITTEN WORK ITSELF: SOME TIPS

- *The approach:* After consultation with your Subject coordinator, you might benefit from making an early visit to the Bodleian Library, to look at a dissertation on a topic related to your own or involving similar methods of treatment.
- *Composition:* It is wise to assume that the actual writing will take longer than you expect. You might suppose that, once the material is collected, composition is a mechanical process. This is seldom the case. Often it is only in the process of composition that the argument, direction, and structure of your project will become clear. Composition can make clear the need for further research and also for revision of work already completed.
- *Style:* The work must be presented 'in a lucid and scholarly manner'. The most important part of the dissertation is the text. The notes, appendices, etc. should support, and not overburden, it. Excessive matter in the footnotes can distract the reader from the main argument. And avoid cluttering your work with reference to unimportant material. Examiners will not expect you to have read *everything*; they will only expect you to have read *everything important and relevant*.
- *Length:* The regulations about maximum length are intended to encourage strict discrimination in the use of material and economy of expression, and they should be taken seriously. That said, you need not strive to achieve the maximum length: a model dissertation displays as much evidence as is necessary to sustain its argument, in as economical a form as can be managed without loss of weight or clarity.

- *Details:* Students are strongly advised to take great care over English grammar and style. Supervisors should not be expected to give time to correcting such matters. Their concern is properly with academic method, content, and coherence.
- Students writing a thesis should give consideration to the following matters: the practice of underlining or italics and the use of quotation marks; the form of abbreviations; the use of capital letters; the form of dates and of references to books and articles; and the ordering of footnotes. The Faculty Board does not lay down regulations covering these points but you are expected to handle them in a clear, neat and consistent fashion, in conformity with generally accepted practice. Technical vocabulary, where it has to be used, should always be carefully explained so that examiners and other readers are left in no doubt about the sense in which the writer is using it.

A good essay or dissertation can be spoilt by lack of attention to detail in the final stages of completion.

**The word count does include footnotes and endnotes but not the bibliography or table of contents.** An accurate statement of the number of words (excluding the bibliography) should accompany the dissertation.

**Penalties will be imposed for over-long essays or dissertation**—usually a reduction in the overall mark awarded for the particular piece of work. Exact details of the penalties are outlined in the Examination Conventions for each course. If you need quote at length from source material in the original language you may gather the quotations in an appendix which would fall outside the word count.

Please note that appendices may NOT be used for commentary or additional prose. Students are advised to consult their supervisors on the use of an appendix. If, for special reasons (e.g., the need to quote at length from unpublished or inaccessible sources), you cannot confine yourself within the maximum word limit, you should apply through your supervisor to the Faculty Board for permission to exceed it by a stated number of words. Such applications should normally be made not less than three months before the intended date of the submission of the dissertation. Permission is granted only in exceptional circumstances. For MTh and PD Diploma in Applied Theology students, please see your course page for specific information about an appendix.

## 11.4 SPACING AND PAGINATION

The regulations require that, unless the Board of the Faculty has excused the student from this requirement, a submission must be word-processed with:

- **Margins:** 3–3.5 cm on the left-hand side.
- **Spacing:** main text double-spaced; quotations and footnotes single-spaced.
- **Font size:** font-size 12, using a clear and legible font such as Arial.
- **Pagination:** pages must be numbered consecutively from start to finish, including appendices, etc. Cross-references should include accurate page numbers.

It is your responsibility to ensure that the print of your essay or dissertation is of an adequate definition and standard for legibility, and that guidance is followed to avoid problems at submission.

## 11.5 FOOTNOTES

Footnotes should normally be placed at the bottom of each page. Notes at the bottom of the page to which they refer are easier to read and check. All footnotes should be typed in single spacing.

## 11.6 REFERENCING/CITATION STYLE and BIBLIOGRAPHY

Preparation of bibliographies in theses is frequently a source of difficulty and the following further comments are offered. It is wise to record bibliographic details as you go, to avoid difficulties at the end.

The Faculty expects written work to be carefully and consistently presented in accordance with one of several standard styles. The chosen style should govern such matters as spelling, abbreviations, punctuation, quotations, footnotes, bibliographical references and other aspects of scholarly presentation. Students are advised to consult with their supervisors about the standard style most appropriate for them, bearing in mind that some styles entail a higher word count than others.

Students of biblical studies may choose to follow *The SBL Handbook of Style for Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), which is available for consultation in the Faculty library and on SOLO.

Other students may choose to follow the Oxford style (New Oxford Style Manual [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016]) or the Chicago style (Kate A. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*, Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing and Publishing, 7th edition [Chicago: University of Chicago, 2007]). Students may also use other standard referencing styles, as long as referencing is clear and consistent throughout their submitted work.

The bibliography is a functional part of a submission. It is not a mere list of matter read, nor, *a fortiori*, of matter unread. The bibliography in a thesis should list all sources used. Printed sources should be listed alphabetically, by surname of author.

If appropriate, the bibliography may be subdivided into (a) primary sources and (b) secondary sources, or in a way that best represents the types of sources consulted (e.g. manuscripts).

## 11.7 APPENDICES

The upper word limits for essays and dissertations are defined by the Examination Regulations for your course, and are therefore not negotiable. Submissions above the word limit may be penalised by the Examination Board, so it is important that they are closely followed. It is, however, recognised that in some cases there might be sources or references (for example, the original texts of sources which have been translated or an annotated list of source materials) which would be best placed in an appendix that does not count towards the overall word count.

An appendix should not exceed 10-20% of the overall word count of the submission in question, as a general rule, and anything included within it should be for the examiners' reference only. It should not be requested as a means of adjusting the upper word limit. Permission for the use of an appendix must be granted by the Graduate Studies Committee, and you may apply for permission by completing the Microsoft form: [Apply for an appendix for a PGT submitted essay or dissertation](#).

Submitting the application for an appendix requires you to declare that you have discussed this in advance with your essay/dissertation supervisor, and that they approve the application.

**MTh and PGDip in Applied Theology students should consult their course page for specific information regarding appendices.**

Applications must be received **no later than two weeks** in advance of the submission deadline for the relevant essay/dissertation.

## 12. GOOD ACADEMIC PRACTICE AND AVOIDING PLAGIARISM

### 12.1 PLAGIARISM

Academic work should strive to excel in two areas: analysis should be clearly structured and rigorously documented, and your referencing should ensure that your scholarly integrity is beyond reproach by readily acknowledging where you refer to the ideas of fellow scholars.

Plagiarism is presenting someone else's work or ideas as your own, with or without their consent, by incorporating it into your work without full acknowledgement. All published and unpublished material, whether in manuscript, printed or electronic form, is covered under this definition. Plagiarism may be intentional or reckless, or unintentional. Under the regulations for examinations, intentional or reckless plagiarism is a disciplinary offence. For an extensive, binding and regularly updated definition of plagiarism and the seriousness with which the University views the practice, please see the Oxford Student's website [guidance on plagiarism](#).

There are different [types of plagiarism](#) and you should familiarise yourself with each of them. You may benefit from taking an [online course](#) which has been developed to provide a useful overview of the issues surrounding plagiarism and practical ways to avoid it.

If plagiarism is suspected in any of your written submissions, the matter will be referred to the relevant Director of Graduate Studies (DGS). They will thoroughly investigate the claim and may call you for interview. As part of the investigation, text-matching software such as iThenticate or TurnItIn may be used to scan the thesis. If at this point there is no evidence of a breach of the regulations, no further disciplinary action will be taken although you still may be required to make changes to your thesis. However, if it is concluded that a breach of the regulations may have occurred, the DGS will refer the matter to the Proctors.

The University has a set policy regarding the use of third-party proof-readers. The details of what is and isn't permitted under this policy can be found [here](#).

### 12.2 GUIDANCE ON AI

The principles that follow are intended to be neither comprehensive nor definitive. This is a rapidly evolving field, and we anticipate that this guidance will be updated at regular intervals. It is also important that it is read in conjunction with the other documents to which it provides links. Students should also refer to their tutors or supervisors on any specific issues regarding the use of AI.

The Faculty cautions students against the uncritical use of generative AI. In particular, the use of AI tools to prepare written texts, will result in texts that will be bland, impersonal, and may contain rogue references (hallucinations, as they are often termed) to non-existent sources or works. It is therefore essential that students approach it as a critical tool, much as they would any other resource. The most important tool however is their own intelligence.

See also the University's [Policy on AI Use in Summative Assessment](#).

## 12.3 GOOD ACADEMIC PRACTICE

### Developing Good Academic Practice

Developing good academic practice at the outset both ensures the avoidance of plagiarism and enables students to make the most of their study. The University supplies guidance on e.g. time management, note-taking, research and library skills and much more in the Study Skills and Training section of the Oxford Students Website.

### Referencing

The Faculty expects written work to be carefully and consistently presented in accordance with one of several standard referencing styles. The chosen referencing style should govern such matters as spelling, abbreviations, punctuation, quotations, footnotes, bibliographical references and other aspects of scholarly presentation. Students are advised to consult with their supervisors about the standard referencing style most appropriate for them, bearing in mind that some referencing styles entail a higher word count than others. Please see section 11.6 above for more information and recommendations.

The [Oxford Students Website](#) includes a brief guide to Referencing, including links to helpful websites hosted by other Universities.

The Bodleian Libraries provide good guidance in the [LibGuide](#) on 'Managing your references', including information on different Reference Management Software that you might wish to employ. It also includes a section on Referencing Styles with links to books, ebooks and a database with comprehensive advice. You can also access training workshops on different software packages.

Comprehensive guidance is available on the [Cite Them Right website](#) (access provided by the Bodleian Libraries - use your SSO).

Style guides are also published and available online from the Modern Humanities Research Association (MHRA) and the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL).

## 13. RESEARCH ETHICS

### 13.1 RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND ETHICS OVERVIEW

The University of Oxford is dedicated to the highest standards of research integrity. As set out in its [Academic Integrity in Research: Code of Practice and Procedure](#), it expects all members of the University including staff and students, and those who are not members of the University but who are conducting research on University premises or using University facilities, to observe the highest standards in the conduct of their research.

#### **Policy on the ethical conduct of research involving human participants and personal data**

The University of Oxford seeks to protect the dignity, rights and welfare of all those involved in research (whether they are participants, researchers or third parties) and to promote high ethical standards of research. The University achieves this by:

- fostering a culture within the University that embraces the principles set down in this policy and the obligations contained in relevant legislation to protect the rights, dignity and welfare of those involved in research;
- providing ethical guidance that communicates regulatory requirements and best practice, and offering ongoing support and training to staff and students to maintain high ethical standards;
- maintaining a review process that subjects research to a level of scrutiny in proportion to the risk of harm or adverse effect.

**All graduate students and academics involved in research involving human participants need to fill in an application to be approved to carry out the research. See: [Research Ethics \(including CUREC\)](#) and the [Faculty Guidance on Research Ethics for PGT students](#).**

### 13.2 CUREC (CENTRAL UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE) APPLICATIONS

In addition to general training for all research students, project-specific ethical review is required for some research in Humanities, especially for projects involving oral history or use of sensitive material pertaining to living persons (e.g. medical records). The University is committed to ensuring that research involving human participants is conducted in a way that respects the dignity, rights, and welfare of participants, and minimises risk to participants, researchers, third parties, and to the University itself. All such research needs to be subject to appropriate, project-specific ethical review.

If your research involves interviewing people, or using sensitive records of those who are still alive or have living relatives, it will require ethical clearance.

You should discuss any ethical or other (e.g. researcher safety, if your work involves overseas travel) implications of your project with your supervisor at the earliest opportunity. It is your responsibility to ensure you obtain any ethics approval you may need.

Please ensure you follow the guidance for Research Ethics and applications found on [Student Hub](#). **All ethics applications must be submitted via [Worktribe](#)**. Further information about Worktribe Ethics is available on the [IT Services Programmes and Projects website](#). A user guide for applicants is also available from this webpage.

Researchers may find it helpful to refer to the following:

- [Information about the University's requirements for ethics review](#)
- [Research ethics and integrity training](#)
- [Resources for researchers preparing an ethics application](#)
- [The SSH IDREC and DREC application process](#)
- [Departmental Research Ethics Committees](#)

If you are in any doubt about the ethical status of your research and/or the need for clearance:

- Discuss the matter with your supervisor.
- Contact [ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk](mailto:ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk) or [worktribe-ethics@it.ox.ac.uk](mailto:worktribe-ethics@it.ox.ac.uk) (Worktribe support).

## 14. EMPLOYMENT AND FINANCE

### 14.1 PAID EMPLOYMENT

Full-time students are expected to be **resident in Oxford during Full Term (i.e. weeks 1-8)** until the residence requirements of the degree have been fulfilled, and free to devote a considerable part of the vacation to academic work. The UK's research councils expect students to work on their academic studies for 44 weeks in the year, and this may be taken as a good guideline.

Part-time students (for those courses that offer part-time study) are required to attend for a minimum of thirty days of university-based work each year, to be arranged with the agreement of the Subject Coordinator, for the period that their name remains on the Register of Graduate Students, unless individually dispensed by the Graduate Studies Committee of the Theology Faculty Board. It is imperative that part-time students keep in regular contact with their Subject Coordinator and College advisor or tutor throughout their studies.

Graduate students should ensure that any paid work does not interfere with the commitment of time required for their course. Students wishing to begin or continue with paid work are encouraged to speak to their Faculty in advance. They are also encouraged to speak with their employer to ensure that any study leave requirements may be accommodated.

The Subject Coordinator should always be informed beforehand if you propose to be absent for a significant period of the term or to engage in activities in vacation which will restrict the amount of academic work that can be done. The Subject Coordinator should offer advice on whether this will interfere with academic progress, and this advice should be taken seriously. The Subject Coordinator will normally mention such circumstances in the termly report.

Paid employment during statutory residence must be limited to a reasonable 'spare-time' undertaking. If employment is to occur during term, or if it is likely to occupy more than a week or two of the vacation, the Subject Coordinator should be told, and given the opportunity to advise on whether it will interfere with academic work.

### 14.2 FUNDING

See Financial Support in **Section 9.3** above.

Details of general funding opportunities, including scholarships and other funds, can be found on the [Faculty's website](#) and on the [University's website](#).

See also the details for funding on your College's website.

The University's [Committee on Student Hardship](#) considers applications from students with financial difficulties during the course of their studies. Applications are submitted through the college.

## 15. APPLICATION FOR ADMISSION TO THE DPhil IN THEOLOGY AND RELIGION AFTER COMPLETING ONE OF THE FACULTY'S MASTER'S PROGRAMMES

If you are currently studying for a Master's degree at Oxford and wish to continue on to a doctoral programme without a break in your study, you can apply for readmission via the [graduate application form](#). You will find a link to the application form and the authorisation code you require in order to submit an application for readmission in [Student Self-Service](#). When you start to complete a new application form you will need to select your "Application Type" from a dropdown menu. Please select "Readmission". You do not need to pay an application fee to submit a readmission application. Information for continuing students can be found in the [Application Guide](#).

Please note that all applicants accepted onto the DPhil programme are initially enrolled as Probationer Research (PRS) students. Those who have already completed one of the Faculty's MPhil programmes, and have already commenced work on their doctoral dissertation, may be directly admitted to DPhil status, if approved by the Graduate Studies Committee (thus waiving the Transfer process). However, this should not be assumed, and will be reviewed on a case by case basis: progression to DPhil status is normally subject to successful Transfer of Status.

### Supporting materials

You will be required to provide the supporting materials for your programme of study when submitting your application form. For guidance on supporting materials please refer to the current [Application Guide](#).

Standard list of supporting materials:

- Research proposal/supporting statement
- Academic record: transcript
- Current curriculum vitae
- Two pieces of written work
- Three references
- English Proficiency score/Test Certificate if English is not your first language

### Deadline

You should ensure that your readmission form and all supporting materials, including your references, are submitted via the online application form in time to meet the application deadline for your chosen programme. The Theology and Religion Faculty uses the early January Application Deadline for DPhil applications.

Late or incomplete readmission applications will not be considered.

### Break in study between Master's degree and DPhil

If there is any break in your study (even if it is only for a term), you will not be able to use the readmission form; you must complete the standard graduate application form and you will be required to pay the application fee.

## 16. FURTHER OPPORTUNITIES

### 16.1 LANGUAGE TUITION

#### Language Centre Course - Priority Funding

If you need to learn a language to support your studies, you can ask your college your department/faculty (if you are a postgraduate) to sponsor you via the Language Centre's Priority Funding scheme. This means that you do not pay for the course yourself and that your application will take priority over other learners. Examples of a Priority Funding application would be students needing to read texts in the target language, to undertake fieldwork or to take an internship in a country where this language is spoken.

The application process has two parts:

- Please complete the Language Centre's Priority Funding Application Form if you are completing the course through the Language Centre. You will need the name and email address of your tutor/supervisor. We recommend you discuss your need for the course with your tutor/supervisor before completing the form. If your tutor/supervisor supports your application, this will be forwarded to the relevant financial signatory at your college/department.
- Please list the following contact as the financial signatory on your application: Vicky Stone (Graduate Studies Administrator - [graduate.studies@theology.ox.ac.uk](mailto:graduate.studies@theology.ox.ac.uk))
- Once both have approved your request, you will be booked onto the course by a member of the Language Centre admin team and you will then receive an automated confirmation email. Please do not enrol yourself onto the course.

#### All other language learning

The Theology and Religion Graduate Studies Committee has been allocated a small sum of money, for which research students can apply for tuition in languages relevant to their studies if tuition is not available for free via the University Language Centre.

To apply for this funding (normally up to a maximum of £200 per student in any given academic year), please [download and complete the form](#) and submit it to [graduate.studies@theology.ox.ac.uk](mailto:graduate.studies@theology.ox.ac.uk). Applications must be submitted by the following dates during Michaelmas, Hilary, and Trinity Terms for consideration by the Graduate Studies Committee:

Monday, Week -1 (Monday before Week 0), or Monday, Week 4

### 16.2 TRAVEL GRANTS

The Faculty encourage graduate students to make visits abroad, familiarise themselves with library resources, make contact with scholars in their field, and attend conferences (particularly if giving a paper). Travel grants are available to Theology and Religion graduate students.

Normally grants may be made up to a maximum of £500 per student in any given academic year. Applications for funds in excess of £500 will only be considered in very exceptional circumstances.

Your college may also be able to help with funding for research travel.

To apply for this funding you should complete the application form, which can be downloaded from the Faculty of Theology and Religion's [Student Hub](#), and submitted to [Graduate Studies](#) by the Monday of 1<sup>st</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> week in any given term, for consideration by the Graduate Studies Committee in 1<sup>st</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> weeks respectively.

Any award granted will be subject to notification of funding received or to be received from other sources (College etc.). Applications will not normally be considered retrospectively, and should be made in advance of the date of travel. Further comprehensive information regarding the terms of the Travel Grant scheme can be found on the application form.

Please note that in the case of a successful application, **funds will not be released** by the Faculty unless you can provide proof of valid Travel Insurance. You will also be required to complete a risk assessment form by the Faculty.

Students are also strongly advised to monitor the Foreign & Commonwealth section of the UK Government website for information on their destination in advance of travelling: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>. Details regarding the University's travel insurance policy is available here: [Travel Insurance | Finance Division \(ox.ac.uk\)](#)

## 16.3 LECTURES AND CLASSES

Termly lecture lists are detailed on [Student Hub](#), usually the week before each full term (week 0). The lists for other Faculties, such as History, Philosophy, or Classics, are available on their respective webpages. The Oxford University Gazette (The University 'newspaper') contains details of special lectures, scholarships, dates of examinations, academic jobs and junior research fellowships at Oxford and Cambridge. The Faculty also has a weekly email which details upcoming seminars, lectures, and conferences.

### 16.3.1 Guidance on participation in Faculty classes

The Faculty offers different categories of class or seminar provision for taught postgraduates, and it is important to distinguish between them, as the differences have implications for student access and participation.

- **Research seminars**

These seminars typically include a presentation from a research student or senior scholar on current research, followed by discussion, are generally open to graduate students in the Faculty of Theology and Religion at every level. It would be advisable to contact the relevant seminar convenor in advance if you intend to join. All Faculty subject or course-based seminars are included in the postgraduate Lecture List, but the Faculty bulletin sometimes contains information about theological seminar series at colleges, which are not publicised through the lecture lists. Please take note of any registration requirements.

- **Core classes for taught programmes**

These classes are specifically tailored to the needs of Master's or Undergraduate students enrolled on particular programmes. Access to core classes by those who are not enrolled on the relevant programme is not automatic. Class convenors may make a judgment that allowing additional class members to join would not be pedagogically beneficial for those for whom the sessions are designed.

If access is permitted, the following conditions usually pertain:

- The student wishing to attend should contact the class convenor before the classes have started.
  - Class participants should commit themselves to attending each session as far as possible.
  - Class participants should commit to reading the set materials.
- There will be situations in which DPhil students wish to attend classes for particular reasons, for mentoring or professional development. If this is the case, access is still at the discretion of the class convenor, but students should make clear their reasons for wishing to attend, and ask their supervisor to write a note of support.

- **Language or set text classes**

The Faculty offers a number of language classes. These fall into two sub-categories:

- General language classes: open to all graduate students in the Faculty, and usually include beginners' and intermediate level study.
- Reading or set text classes: designed for examination preparation for specific programmes, and for those wishing to attend who are not enrolled on those programmes, the same principles apply as for Core classes above.

## 16.4 GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY (GTS)

The Graduate Theological Society (GTS) is the society for postgraduate students in Oxford's Faculty of Theology and Religion. The GTS committee aims to strengthen intellectual and social engagement across the Faculty's graduate community and organizes a number of events each year. All postgraduates in the Faculty of Theology and Religion are members of the Graduate Theological Society.

## 16.5 STUDENT REPRESENTATION AND FEEDBACK

Students on full-time and part-time matriculated courses are surveyed once per year on all aspects of their course (learning, living, pastoral support, college) through the Student Barometer. Previous results can be viewed by students, staff and the general public at: [www.ox.ac.uk/students/life/student-engagement](http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/life/student-engagement). The Faculty also conducts a termly survey of postgraduate students with questions designed to continually improve our postgraduate offerings. The feedback given in surveys is discussed at GSC and GJCC.

The Graduate Joint Consultative Committee (GJCC) consists of elected representatives of the graduate student body (elected each Michaelmas Term), the Faculty Board Chairman and the Director of Graduate Studies. It meets once each term in week 4, and is intended to keep graduate students

informed of developments that affect them, as well as to offer an opportunity for addressing their concerns. GJCC members also serve as representatives on key Faculty Board committees. Please check emails, the Student Hub, and Graduate student Facebook group for useful information from the GJCC.

## 17. TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The academic and college environment at Oxford University is rich with opportunities for you to develop many transferable skills that are eagerly sought by employers. Undertaking an intellectually demanding academic course (often incorporating professional body requirements) will equip you for the demands of many jobs. Your course will enable you to research, summarise, present and defend an argument with some of the best scholars in their subject. Under the direction of an experienced researcher, you will expand your skills and experiences through practical or project work, placements or fieldwork, writing extended essays or dissertations. In college and university sports teams, clubs and societies you will have the chance to take the lead and play an active part within and outside the University.

Surveys of our employers report that they find Oxford students better or much better than the average UK student at key employability skills such as problem solving, leadership, and communication. Hundreds of recruiters visit the University each year, demonstrating their demand for Oxford undergraduate and postgraduate students, fewer than 5% of whom are unemployed and seeking work six months after leaving.

Comprehensive careers advice and guidance is available from the Oxford University Careers Service, and not just while you are here: our careers support is for life. We offer tailored individual advice, job fairs and workshops to inform your job search and application process, whether your next steps are within academia or beyond. You will also have access to thousands of UK-based and international internships, work experience and job vacancies available on the [Careers Service website](#).

### 17.1 HUMANITIES DIVISION RESOURCES

Training provided and promoted by the Humanities Division is designed to complement and supplement subject-specific and generic training provided through your faculty, and training opportunities provided by the Language Centre, Computing Service, Library Service and Careers Service.

Training opportunities include the following:

- [Advancing Teaching and Learning](#) accredited teaching programme provided in conjunction with the Oxford Centre for Teaching and Learning
- Preparing for the DPhil Viva.
- Journal Article Publishing workshop.
- Organizing conferences.
- Preparation for Academic Practice.
- Graduate Poster Competition.
- Public Engagement Summer Schools.
- Entrepreneurship.
- Digital Humanities.

Find out more about graduate training in the Humanities and see an up-to-date list of events at: [www.humanities.ox.ac.uk/researcher-development](http://www.humanities.ox.ac.uk/researcher-development)

A wide range of information and training materials are available to help you develop your academic skills – including time management, research and library skills, referencing, revision skills and academic writing – through the [Oxford Students](#) website.

## 17.2 FACULTY RESOURCES

### Professional Development

The Faculty's Director of Graduate Professional Development is [Dr Rachel Cresswell](#). With the support of the Director of Graduate Studies, Dr Cresswell organizes a regular programme of training in subject-specific and transferable skills.

The training takes the form of lunchtime workshops held in the Faculty, aimed at equipping you with the necessary skills for success in your graduate studies and supporting you as you prepare for the next steps. Workshops include topics such as:

**Getting into...**the DPhil/PhD

**Getting through...**Transfer/Confirmation of Status

**Getting ahead...**in the academic job market

**Getting published...**for academic and popular audiences

### Right to Work checks for students

Please be aware that the Faculty is required to undertake checks for anyone who will be working for the Faculty before the work takes place. This applies to any teaching, research assistance, or other paid work undertaken by students. If you are asked to undertake any work for which you will be paid by the Faculty, please get in touch with the Head of Administration and Finance by emailing [haf@theology.ox.ac.uk](mailto:haf@theology.ox.ac.uk) at the earliest opportunity.

## 17.3 OTHER RESOURCES

- The [Humanities Division Researcher Development Support](#) has a well-established programme of training and support, as well as a dedicated [Humanities Training Officer](#), who is available for advice and support.
- [Oxford's Careers Service](#) has a sophisticated database of training and employment opportunities, and offers consultations, seminars and advice.
- [Oxford's IT Services](#) have an impressive programme of free and very affordable courses in IT skills, ranging from basic proficiency to work with databases, professional software, and programming languages.
- [Oxford's Language Centre](#) offers university students and staff courses in twelve languages and independent study resources for 140 further languages.
- The [Centre for Teaching and Learning](#) mainly offers career development courses for staff, but also provides some resources for graduate students.
- The Bodleian Library (<http://libguides.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/workshops>) offers free workshops and resources on all things related to information management, analysis and publication.

## 17.4 WORKING IN THE UK AFTER YOUR STUDIES – THE GRADUATE ROUTE VISA

The Graduate Route visa is an opportunity to apply for a visa to remain in the UK to work or look for work for two years if you have completed an undergraduate degree, PGCE or masters degree, or three years if you have completed a DPhil. On 12 May 2025 the government published its [Immigration White Paper](#) in which it states it will reduce the period for the Graduate route to 18 months. We do not yet know when this will be implemented or if this reduced period will also apply to Taught Graduate Students.

Please refer to the [University's information on the Graduate Route Visa](#) for FAQs and instructions about how to apply. If you have any questions please contact the [Student Immigration team](#). You will need to have successfully completed your qualification before you apply i.e. received your official results/leave to supplicate. The Home Office also requires the University to report online when all visa holders have successfully completed their studies, in case you wish to apply for this visa, and the Student Immigration team will run a report every Friday throughout the year for this purpose. You will receive an email on the Friday of the week you have received your results/leave to supplicate, to confirm this has been reported to the Home Office. You should wait until you have received this email confirmation before you apply for the Graduate Route. Remember that you can only apply from within the UK and you need to still have a valid Tier 4 or Student visa.

## 18. COMPLAINTS AND ACADEMIC APPEALS

### 18.1 COMPLAINTS

The University, the Humanities Division and the Faculty of Theology and Religion all hope that provision made for students at all stages of their course of study will result in no need for complaints (about that provision) or appeals (against the outcomes of any form of assessment).

Where such a need arises, an informal discussion with the person immediately responsible for the issue that you wish to complain about (and who may not be one of the individuals identified below) is often the simplest way to achieve a satisfactory resolution.

Many sources of advice are available from colleges, faculties/departments and bodies like the Counselling Service or the OUSU Student Advice Service, which have extensive experience in advising students. You may wish to take advice from one of those sources before pursuing your complaint.

General areas of concern about provision affecting students as a whole should be raised through Joint Consultative Committees or via student representation on the Faculty's committees.

If your concern or complaint relates to teaching or other provision made by the Faculty, then you should raise it with the Director of Graduate Studies. Complaints about departmental facilities should be made to the Head of Administration and Finance. If you feel unable to approach one of those individuals, you may contact the Faculty Board Chairman, Professor William Wood. The officer concerned will attempt to resolve your concern/complaint informally.

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome, you may take your concern further by making a formal complaint to the Proctors under the University Student Complaints Procedure (<https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/complaints>).

If your concern or complaint relates to teaching or other provision made by your college, you should raise it either with your tutor or with one of the college officers, Senior Tutor, Tutor for Graduates (as appropriate). Your college will also be able to explain how to take your complaint further if you are dissatisfied with the outcome of its consideration.

### 18.2 ACADEMIC APPEALS

An academic appeal is an appeal against the decision of an academic body (e.g. boards of examiners, transfer and confirmation decisions etc.), on grounds such as procedural error or evidence of bias. There is no right of appeal against academic judgement. **Academic appeals** concern the outcome of examinations and follow a different process from **complaints** about teaching and supervision.

You should discuss your concern in the first instance with your supervisor and College advisor/ Tutor for Graduates. If you want to lodge an appeal, this has to be brought **via your College** to the Proctors' Office, not via the Faculty. This is primarily because Oxford separates teaching and examination. **Please note that on no account should you raise your concerns directly with those who have examined your work.**

If you still have concerns you can make a formal appeal to the Proctors who will consider appeals under the [University Academic Appeals Procedure](#).

As noted above, the procedures adopted by the Proctors in relation to complaints and appeals are described on: the [Proctors' webpage](#) and the relevant [Council regulations](#).

Please remember in connection with all the academic appeals that:

- The Proctors are not empowered to challenge the academic judgement of examiners or academic bodies.
- The Proctors can consider whether the procedures for reaching an academic decision were properly followed; i.e. whether there was a significant procedural administrative error; whether there is evidence of bias or inadequate assessment; whether the examiners failed to take into account special factors affecting a candidate's performance.
- On no account should you contact your examiners or assessors directly.
- 

The Proctors will indicate what further action you can take if you are dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint or appeal considered by them.

Please note that there is an important difference between making a **formal complaint** (about your experience as a student, treatment by others, etc.) and lodging an **academic appeal**.

### 18.3 HARASSMENT

As noted above, colleges and faculties have appointed Harassment Advisers within a network of such advisers organised centrally. The University's [Harassment Advisory Service](#) is available on the EDU website.

## APPENDICES

### A. FIELDWORK

See: <https://safety.admin.ox.ac.uk/fieldwork>. Additional guidance for fieldwork and travel may be found on the [Faculty's Student Hub](#).

All students travelling abroad as part of their studies should complete one of two documents, returning a copy to their supervisor prior to departure. A copy of the relevant document(s), including a signature from the supervisor and student, should also be submitted to the Faculty Office prior to departure. The **Travel Itinerary** should be filled in by anyone travelling abroad to conferences, or to conduct library- or archive-based research in countries that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (F.C.O.), [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-office](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-office) regards as safe ('no travel restrictions in place'). The more detailed **Risk Assessment** should also be completed, alongside an itinerary, by anyone conducting fieldwork abroad, or travelling to a country where F.C.O. travel restrictions are in place.

The relevant documents (**Travel Itinerary**, **Risk Assessment** and **Guidance**) can be found in the Theology and Religion PG Information section on Canvas.

Further information about travel abroad, including details of safety courses run by the university for this purpose, can be found in the **Guidance** document. For any queries or guidance relating to travel abroad or any of the documents mentioned, please contact: [haf@theology.ox.ac.uk](mailto:haf@theology.ox.ac.uk)

### B. OTHER UNIVERSITY POLICIES and GUIDANCE

[University's Health and Safety Policy](#)

**University [Equality Policy](#)**

The Equality and Diversity Unit works with all parts of the collegiate University to develop and promote an understanding of equality and diversity and ensure that this is reflected in all its processes. The Unit also supports the University in meeting the legal requirements of the Equality Act 2010, including eliminating unlawful discrimination, promoting equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between people with and without the 'protected characteristics' of age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and/or belief and sexual orientation. Visit our website for further details or contact us directly for advice: <https://edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/home#/> or [equality@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:equality@admin.ox.ac.uk).

The Equality and Diversity Unit also supports a broad network of harassment advisors in departments/faculties and colleges and a central Harassment Advisory Service. For more information on the University's Harassment and Bullying policy and the support available for students visit: <https://edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/harassment-advice/>

There is range of faith societies, belief groups, and religious centres within Oxford University that are open to students. For more information visit: <https://edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/faith-societies>

[Safety and Supervisor Responsibilities](#)  
[University Policy on Data Protection](#)

FACULTY OF  
**THEOLOGY  
AND  
RELIGION**



UNIVERSITY OF  
**OXFORD**

# **Handbook for Postgraduate Research Students (DPhil, MLitt)**

**Faculty of Theology and Religion  
University of Oxford**

**Academic Year 2025-26 v.1**

# This Handbook

This handbook sets out the basic framework for a graduate research degree, and what to do should you encounter delays, setbacks, or need to make changes.

It applies to students starting a Postgraduate Research course in the Faculty of Theology and Religion in Michaelmas Term 2025. The information in this handbook may be different for students starting in other years.

The Examination Regulations relating to these courses (DPhil and MLitt) are available at [Research Degrees in Theology and Religion \(ox.ac.uk\)](https://www.ox.ac.uk/research-degrees).

You should consult the current edition of the Examination Regulations for information regarding your degree. The information in this handbook should be read in conjunction with the Examination Regulations, the [University Student Handbook](#), and your college handbook. The following regulations may also be helpful to you:

1. [General Regulations for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy](#)
2. [General Regulations for the Degree of Master of Letters](#)
3. [General Regulations Governing Research Degrees](#)
4. [Research Degrees in the Humanities Division](#)
5. [Research Degrees in Theology and Religion](#)

## Disclaimer

If there is a conflict between the information in this handbook and the Examination Regulations, then you should follow the Examination Regulations. If you have any concerns, please contact the Faculty at [graduate.studies@theology.ox.ac.uk](mailto:graduate.studies@theology.ox.ac.uk).

Comments and criticism of the handbook are welcome; they should be sent to the [Director of Graduate Studies](#) (Jenn Strawbridge) or [Graduate Studies \(@theology.ox.ac.uk\)](#).

The information in this handbook is accurate as of Michaelmas Term 2025; however it may be necessary for changes to be made in certain circumstances, as explained at <https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/courses/changes-to-courses>. If such changes are made the Faculty will publish a new version of this handbook together with a list of the changes and students will be informed.

## Student Hub

The [Student Hub](#) is an ongoing project to provide a live online version of the handbook, together with more detailed course information and further resources such as forms, seminar lists, and exam conventions. Please check the information on Student Hub in conjunction with this handbook. You can access the Student Hub through the top bar of the [Faculty website](#). You will need to log in using your Single Sign On (SSO). Other key sources of information include the University's [Oxford Students website](#) as well as your college's postgraduate website.

## Version History

| Version | Date       | Change               |
|---------|------------|----------------------|
| 1.0     | 01-10-2025 | Original publication |

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# 1. INTRODUCTION TO THE FACULTY OF THEOLOGY AND RELIGION

## 1.1 WELCOME

Welcome to postgraduate study in the Faculty of Theology and Religion, which is part of the Humanities Division at the University of Oxford. We hope you will enjoy your studies with us!

From the start of 2025–26 academic year, the Faculty will be located in the new Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities in the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter. Within this new space you will find the Faculty Office, graduate study and social space, and library resources.

This handbook is designed as a guide for students in the Faculty of Theology and Religion undertaking either the Doctor of Philosophy (DPhil) in Theology and Religion or the Master of Letters (MLitt) in Theology and Religion, commencing in Michaelmas 2025. It provides an overview of the supervision, assessment, opportunities and resources related to your course and will be an important point of reference for you throughout your degree. Familiarise yourself with the content so that you know what is covered here for future reference.

Please ensure that you pay close attention to email communication from the Faculty and remain in regular contact with your supervisor. Please also complete the Graduate Student Reporting (GSR) process at the end of each term to ensure any concerns are shared and any successes celebrated.

If you have concerns or questions, do not hesitate to ask for help from those involved in graduate studies in Theology and Religion. The following pages will give you further details of those from whom appropriate advice may be sought. For any administrative queries, please contact [Graduate Studies \(@theology.ox.ac.uk\)](mailto:GraduateStudies@theology.ox.ac.uk).

As Director of Graduate Studies in Theology and Religion and on behalf of my colleagues, I would like to extend a very warm welcome as you arrive to Oxford (and a welcome back for those returning for a new degree programme). I hope you will soon feel part of the graduate community in the Faculty and that your time in Oxford will be both challenging and rewarding. We look forward to working with you.



*Professor Jenn Strawbridge, Mansfield College*  
Director of Graduate Studies  
Professor in New Testament and Early Christian Studies

**Professor Strawbridge** is also the Postgraduate Disability Lead and Welfare Lead for the Faculty.

## 1.2 KEY CONTACTS 2025–26

For questions and concerns, you should contact the following people:

### Your Supervisor

All students are assigned a supervisor by the Faculty Board. In the case of a research degree, the supervisor will be your primary mentor and teacher. Section 9 outlines some of the university's expectations for the supervisory relationship. Your responsibilities include:

- Keep in regular contact with your supervisor.
- Meet at least twice a term to plan and review progress.
- Complete your termly Graduate Supervision Report (GSR); your supervisor will respond, and the Director of Graduate Studies (and your College) reviews both reports to ensure an accurate record of progress is maintained.

Your supervisor's responsibilities include:

- Respond to your GSR report and comment on your academic progress
- Advise on all academic work, including lectures and classes
- Address queries relating to academic progress
- Arrange alternative supervision if unavailable on research leave

### Director of Graduate Studies (DGS)

The DGS, who for 2025–26 is Professor Jenn Strawbridge ([dgs@theology.ox.ac.uk](mailto:dgs@theology.ox.ac.uk)),:

- Oversees graduate students in Theology and Religion
- Can advise and point to appropriate resources and contacts for concerns about academic progress and welfare
- Chairs the Graduate Studies Committee and Graduate Joint Consultative Committee

### Graduate Studies Administrative Team

The Graduate Studies Administrative Team for the Faculty ([graduate.studies@theology.ox.ac.uk](mailto:graduate.studies@theology.ox.ac.uk)):

- Supports all on-course graduate matters including:
  - All milestones: Transfer, Confirmation, Submission
  - Adjustments to study applications: suspension, extension, withdrawal
  - Title and supervisor changes
  - Examination administration and admissions
  - Indepth knowledge of graduate policies and procedures and are an excellent resource and support

### Your Subject Coordinator

A subject coordinator oversees the delivery of teaching, graduate seminars, and often social gatherings in their subject area. Details of subject coordinators are found on the next page.

### The Tutor for Graduates or Dean of Graduates at your College

Your college will have a Tutor for Graduates (sometimes the Senior Tutor), who has overall responsibility for graduate members of the college. Colleges review the progress of each student through the termly GSR reports. Colleges take responsibility for general welfare, social facilities and support services such as computing and study facilities. They may also offer help with housing and finance and are responsible for collecting fees.

### **Your College Advisor**

Some colleges assign a College Adviser to each graduate student. The College Adviser is not to be confused with the Faculty supervisor. Their role is not to supervise the student's research, but to be a source of independent counsel, should that be needed.

### **The Graduate Student Representatives**

The graduate community has a number of elected representatives who organise events and work to create community, share concerns with the Faculty, and serve on the Graduate Joint Consultative Committee (GJCC) and other key Faculty committees. GJCC consists of these elected representatives, the Faculty Board Chair (currently Professor Mark Edwards) and the Director of Graduate Studies. It meets once each term in Week 4, and is intended to keep graduate students informed of developments that affect them. Following elections in Michaelmas Term, the representatives for the new academic year will be detailed on the [Student Hub](#).

## **1.3 FACULTY STRUCTURE**

Overall responsibility for graduate studies in Theology and Religion lies with the Theology and Religion Faculty Board. A committee of the Board, the Graduate Studies Committee (GSC), meets twice a term, usually on Tuesdays of 1<sup>st</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> weeks. GSC reports to the Faculty Board, which meets on Thursday afternoons in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> weeks. The Board appoints the Director of Graduate Studies.

There is also a Graduate Joint Consultative Committee (GJCC), which is specifically devoted to discussion of issues between Faculty and postgraduate students and building the graduate community.

The Faculty is divided into nine subject areas, each overseen by a Subject Coordinator. The Subject Coordinators for 2025–26 are:

|                                    |                                                                  |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Christian and Religious Ethics:    | Professor Luke Bretherton                                        |
| Ecclesiastical History:            | Dr Colin Donnelly                                                |
| Hebrew Bible/Old Testament         | Professor Hindy Najman<br>(MT: Professor Katherine Southwood)    |
| Historical and Systematic Theology | Dr Phillip Moller<br>(On leave: Professor Andrew Davison)        |
| New Testament                      | Professor Markus Bockmuehl<br>(MT: Professor David Downs)        |
| Patristics                         | Professor Carol Harrison                                         |
| Philosophical Theology             | Professor Mark Wynn<br>(MT and HT: Professor Bill Wood)          |
| Science and Religion               | Professor Mark Harris                                            |
| Study of Religions                 | Professor Frank Griffel<br>(MT and HT: Professor Jan Westerhoff) |

The main office contact for all graduate matters is: [graduate.studies@theology.ox.ac.uk](mailto:graduate.studies@theology.ox.ac.uk)

## 1.4 A FEW OXFORD TERMS AND ACRONYMS

|              |                                                                                                                                                                            |
|--------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| PRS          | Probationer Research Student<br>This is the 'status' which the majority of students have when they are first admitted to a DPhil degree in a Humanities subject at Oxford. |
| Transfer     | 'Transfer' refers to the process of transferring status from Probationer Research Student to DPhil student.                                                                |
| Confirmation | 'Confirmation' refers to the process of confirming status as a DPhil student.                                                                                              |
| Viva         | Short for <i>viva voce</i> , which is an oral examination                                                                                                                  |
| DPhil        | Doctor of Philosophy                                                                                                                                                       |
| DGS          | Director of Graduate Studies                                                                                                                                               |
| GSC          | Graduate Studies Committee                                                                                                                                                 |
| GJCC         | Graduate Joint Consultative Committee                                                                                                                                      |

## 2. RESEARCH STUDENT INFORMATION

### 2.1 OXFORD ACADEMIC YEAR

The academic year at Oxford has three 8-week terms: Michaelmas (MT; Autumn), Hilary (HT; Spring), and Trinity (TT; Summer). Terms are named by week (e.g. Week 1), and graduates often meet with supervisors or attend faculty events in the week before full term starts, which is called 'Noughth Week'.

Full-time students must follow residency requirements in [Oxford during term](#) (see below). Graduates are expected to engage in academic work for a significant part of the vacation periods. The UK's research councils expect students to work on their academic studies for 44 weeks in the year, which may be taken as a good guideline.

### 2.2 LENGTH OF STUDY

The Faculty of Theology and Religion offers two research degrees, which differ in the length of the thesis and rigour of the requirements:

- **Doctor of Philosophy in Theology and Religion (DPhil)** - normally requiring between nine and twelve terms (3–4 years), or 6–8 years part-time, to complete and is awarded following submission of a thesis and an oral examination
- **Master of Letters in Theology and Religion (MLitt)\*** - normally requiring six terms to complete and is awarded following submission of a thesis and oral examination.

\*The MLitt can only be taken as a full-time student and is only be awarded to DPhil students who, for unforeseen circumstances, are unable to complete their DPhil degree.

### 2.3 PART-TIME STUDY

Part-time students are fully integrated into the research culture of the Faculty and afforded all the same opportunities and support as full-time students. The Faculty appreciates that part-time research students will have non-standard attendance and work patterns, and our broad assumption is that part-time students will progress at half the pace of full-time students.

Except for differences in the timing of progression steps, the advice and instructions below apply equally to part-time and full-time students, but we do recognise that studying part-time involves particular challenges, and we urge you to contact your supervisor, [Graduate Studies](#), or your GJCC Representatives if you have concerns, or suggestions for how we might be able to improve your conditions of work and study.

Part-time students are expected to attend on a regular basis for supervision, skills training, and participate in some of the research seminars. Speak to your supervisor and/or course coordinator for expectations within your subject area.

It is possible to apply to change mode of study from full-time to part-time, or vice versa. This change may be done only once during your entire period of doctoral study.

## 2.4 STATUTORY RESIDENCE

Oxford is a residential University: to qualify for a higher degree, students (except part-time students) are required to keep six terms' (or three terms' for students who have completed an Oxford MPhil degree) residence in Oxford. Colleges are responsible for certifying residence.

Full-time students must complete a minimum period of residence in Oxford:

- **DPhil:** 6 terms (if you completed a master's course at Oxford before the DPhil, up to 3 terms may count towards the residency requirement).
- **MLitt:** 6 terms

Research conducted elsewhere (e.g. archives, fieldwork) counts towards residence: **you do NOT need to apply for dispensation from statutory residence in order to conduct research outside Oxford.**

After Transfer of Status, if you do require time away, you may apply for **Dispensation from Statutory Residence** (up to 3 terms) by completing the **GSO.8 form**, found in the online forms at [Student Self Service](#).

Practically, requiring residence ensures that graduates have the opportunity to advance their professional development by attending research seminars and appropriate training sessions, and more generally by participating in the academic life and research culture of the University. You are encouraged to remain in residence even when you have completed the minimum requirement, in order to avail yourself of these opportunities. If there are good reasons for you to reside elsewhere, you should, if possible, try to identify comparable opportunities to maintain your professional development e.g. by obtaining permission to attend research seminars at a local university.

## 2.5 PAID EMPLOYMENT

Academic work should be your priority.

Your supervisor should always be informed beforehand if you propose to be absent for a significant period of the term or to engage in activities in vacation which will restrict the amount of academic work that can be done.

Paid employment during statutory residence must be limited to a reasonable 'spare time' undertaking. If employment is to occur during term, or if it is likely to occupy more than a week or two of the vacation, your supervisor should be given the opportunity to advise on whether it will interfere with academic work. This advice should be taken seriously. The supervisor will normally mention such circumstances in the termly GSR report.

The University does not define what it understands to be a reasonable amount of part-time employment. The Arts and Humanities Research Council allows up to six hours a week of teaching for its scholarship-holders, which may be taken as a good guideline.

## 2.6 STUDENT VISA HOLDERS

As a Student visa holder, there are certain responsibilities that you have, and that the University has. For example, visa holders must:

- Keep your information updated on the [Student Self-Service](#) system
- Inform the University if you get an updated passport.
- Maintain regular contact with supervisors and complete termly GSR reports.
- Avoid unapproved absences (the University must report these to the Home Office; this can impact your visa).

Legally, the Faculty must monitor your attendance and make sure that you are engaged with your studies. If we have not heard from you in the course of a term, you may be contacted by [Graduate Studies](#) or your College office, to check in with you. If you will be away, it's good always to keep the Faculty and your College in the loop.

Further guidance for visa holders:

- University information and outline of obligations for visa holders: [here](#).
- You can contact the Student Immigration Team: [student.immigration@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:student.immigration@admin.ox.ac.uk).
- The Home Office page about the Student visa is available [here](#).

If you are interested in staying in the UK to work after your course you will need to apply for the right type of visa permission to do so. See Section 15 below.

### 3. RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND ETHICS

#### 3.1 RESEARCH INTEGRITY CORE COURSE

The University is a signatory to the [UK Concordat to Support Research Integrity](#) which mandates training in research ethics for all doctoral students. The University regards research integrity as a core value and has a longstanding commitment to ensuring that it is embedded in its research culture and activity.

As part of your Transfer of Status and within your first few terms, you should complete the short (and fairly straightforward) online [research integrity training course](#).

**You must complete this course before applying for Transfer to DPhil student status.**

The course introduces:

- Your responsibilities as a researcher
- Common ethical challenges
- Strategies for meeting integrity standards

Oxford's [Academic Integrity in Research: Code of Practice and Procedure](#) sets out that all researchers, be they staff, students or visitors, are expected to maintain the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of their research.

#### 3.2 CUREC (CENTRAL UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE) APPLICATIONS

In addition to general training for all research students, project-specific ethical review is required for some research in Humanities, especially for projects involving oral history or use of sensitive material pertaining to living persons (e.g. medical records). The University is committed to ensuring that research involving human participants is conducted in a way that respects the dignity, rights, and welfare of participants, and minimises risk to participants, researchers, third parties, and to the University itself. All such research needs to be subject to appropriate, project-specific ethical review.

If your research involves interviewing people, or using sensitive records of those who are still alive or have living relatives, it will require ethical clearance.

You should discuss any ethical or other (e.g. researcher safety, if your work involves overseas travel) implications of your project with your supervisor at the earliest opportunity. It is your responsibility to ensure you obtain any ethics approval you may need.

Please ensure you follow the guidance for Research Ethics and applications found on [Student Hub](#). **All ethics applications must be submitted via [Worktribe](#).** Further information about Worktribe Ethics is available on the [IT Services Programmes and Projects website](#). A user guide for applicants is also available from this webpage.

Researchers may find it helpful to refer to the following:

- [Information about the University's requirements for ethics review](#)
- [Research ethics and integrity training](#)

- [Resources for researchers preparing an ethics application](#)
- [The SSH IDREC and DREC application process](#)
- [Departmental Research Ethics Committees](#)

If you are in any doubt about the ethical status of your research and/or the need for clearance:

- Discuss the matter with your supervisor.
- Contact [ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk](mailto:ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk) or [worktribe-ethics@it.ox.ac.uk](mailto:worktribe-ethics@it.ox.ac.uk) (Worktribe support).

## 4. PROGRESSING THROUGH YOUR RESEARCH DEGREE

As a research student, you are responsible for your own academic progress. Student life can be busy, so careful planning is essential. Learning languages, for example, is a matter of regular preparation and revision, rather than last-minute cramming for examinations. Falling behind is easy; catching up is much more difficult.

Your degree is full-time and you are expected to continue your studies during vacations.

A wide range of resources are available to help you develop your academic skills – including in time management, research and library skills, referencing, revision skills, and academic writing. See [Oxford Study Guidance and Skills](#).

Throughout your degree you will have the opportunity to attend faculty seminars, lectures and colloquia, as well as a variety of skills training sessions tailored to different stages of the graduate career.

There are a number of key milestones which you must pass in order to progress through your degree. Detailed guidance on each academic milestone is set out below. We recommend you review it well in advance of each milestone deadline.

### Key details:

- You are admitted as a Probationer Research Student (PRS)
- You are expected to submit your thesis within four years from being admitted as a PRS.
- Candidates will lose their Probationer Research Student status if they have not gained admission to another status (e.g. D.Phil or M.Litt) within six terms of admission as a full-time student, or within twelve terms of admission as a part-time student, to the status of Probationer Research Student, or if the faculty board concerned deprives them of such status (after consultation with the college/hall and supervisor).
- If you do not confirm DPhil status by the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> term (for full-time students), you will lose your student status and will no longer be registered as a student of the University. In *exceptional* circumstances, you may apply for a deferral.
- If you do not submit your thesis twelve terms from admission as a PRS, DPhil status is lost, and you will no longer be registered as a student of the University. In exceptional circumstances, you may apply for an extension of time to submit your thesis.

## 4.1 DPHIL TIMETABLES

| Year | Term | Full-time DPhil students                                           |                                                           |
|------|------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| 1    | 1    |                                                                    |                                                           |
|      | 2    |                                                                    |                                                           |
|      | 3    | Submit Transfer Application                                        |                                                           |
| 2    | 4    |                                                                    | Transfer must be <b>completed</b> by the end of 4th term  |
|      | 5    |                                                                    |                                                           |
|      | 6    |                                                                    |                                                           |
| 3    | 7    | Submit Confirmation application                                    |                                                           |
|      | 8    |                                                                    | Confirmation must be completed by the end of the 8th term |
|      | 9    |                                                                    |                                                           |
| 4    | 10   | Aim to submit thesis                                               |                                                           |
|      | 11   |                                                                    |                                                           |
|      | 12   | Final Deadline to submit thesis: end of term (Friday Week 0 of MT) |                                                           |

|  |                                                   |
|--|---------------------------------------------------|
|  | Fee liability period and minimum enrolment period |
|--|---------------------------------------------------|

| Year | Term | Part-time DPhil students                                           |                                                                  |  |
|------|------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| 1    | 1    |                                                                    |                                                                  |  |
|      | 2    |                                                                    |                                                                  |  |
|      | 3    |                                                                    |                                                                  |  |
| 2    | 4    |                                                                    |                                                                  |  |
|      | 5    |                                                                    |                                                                  |  |
|      | 6    | Submit Transfer Application                                        | Transfer must be <b>completed</b> by the end of 8th term         |  |
| 3    | 7    |                                                                    |                                                                  |  |
|      | 8    |                                                                    |                                                                  |  |
|      | 9    |                                                                    |                                                                  |  |
| 4    | 10   |                                                                    |                                                                  |  |
|      | 11   |                                                                    |                                                                  |  |
|      | 12   |                                                                    |                                                                  |  |
| 5    | 13   |                                                                    |                                                                  |  |
|      | 14   | Submit Confirmation application                                    |                                                                  |  |
|      | 15   |                                                                    |                                                                  |  |
| 6    | 16   |                                                                    | Confirmation must be <b>achieved</b> by the end of the 16th term |  |
|      | 17   |                                                                    |                                                                  |  |
|      | 18   |                                                                    |                                                                  |  |
| 7    | 19   |                                                                    |                                                                  |  |
|      | 20   |                                                                    |                                                                  |  |
|      | 21   |                                                                    |                                                                  |  |
| 8    | 22   | Aim to submit thesis                                               |                                                                  |  |
|      | 23   |                                                                    |                                                                  |  |
|      | 24   | Final Deadline to submit thesis: end of term (Friday Week 0 of MT) |                                                                  |  |

|  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
|  | Fee liability period     |
|  | Minimum enrolment period |

## 4.2 PART-TIME DPHIL: ATTENDANCE AND SUBMISSION DEADLINES

### 4.2.1 ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS

Part-time students are required to attend for a minimum of thirty days of university based work each year, to be arranged with the agreement of the supervisor, for the period that their name remains on the Register of Graduate Students, unless individually dispensed by the Graduate Studies Committee of the Theology Faculty Board.

#### 4.2.2 TRANSFER OF STATUS (PT)

In line with the Faculty's requirement for full-time students, part-time students are expected to apply to transfer to DPhil status not later than the beginning of their sixth term, i.e. by Monday of 0<sup>th</sup> week. PRS status may, in exceptional cases, be held for up to twelve terms, as allowed by University regulations.

#### 4.2.3 CONFIRMATION OF STATUS (PT)

DPhil students are expected to confirm their status by their sixteenth term as a graduate student.

### 5. PROBATIONER RESEARCH STUDENT

#### 5.1 PROBATIONARY RESEARCH PERIOD

All incoming research students begin as Probationer Research Students (PRS) and as part of your degree you are required to meet certain milestones in order to progress. You will apply for **Transfer of Status** (after which your status will be that of DPhil candidate/student) and then **Confirmation of Status** before finally submitting your thesis for examination.

You are normally expected to submit for Transfer in your third term and no later than the beginning of your fourth term, and it must be *completed* before the end of your fourth term.

You should familiarise yourself with the procedures for Transfer, Confirmation and submission of your thesis which are set out in the Examination Regulations: [Research Degrees in Theology and Religion \(ox.ac.uk\)](https://www.ox.ac.uk/examination-regulations/research-degrees-in-theology-and-religion).

#### 5.2 MPhil TO DPhil: PRS and DPhil STATUS

The Faculty must decide whether a doctoral student who has completed a two-year MPhil at Oxford should be admitted to PRS status or directly to DPhil status.

University regulations state that applicants who have completed a two-year MPhil degree at the University of Oxford can be admitted either as a Probationer Research Student or as a student with DPhil status. To establish which status a student will readmitted to, supervisors will be contacted by the office to ascertain if the project builds very directly on the MPhil thesis, whether the student is already working at doctoral standard and whether they are likely to be ready to submit for and pass Confirmation of Status in the Trinity term following readmission (i.e. in their first year of the DPhil).

**Waiving Transfer will only be permitted in the most exceptional cases, and is by no means an automatic entitlement after having completed an MPhil.**

Important considerations and deadlines to note:

- If a MPhil student is admitted to PRS status, they follow the deadlines and procedures for all PRS students outlined in this handbook.
- If a MPhil student is admitted directly, they must apply for and complete the Confirmation of Status process by the end of Trinity Term of Year 1 of their doctoral

studies. Deadlines for Confirmation and Submission are calculated from the term of admission to the MPhil.

### 5.3 ADJUSTMENTS TO ASSESSMENTS FOR POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENTS

Research degree students who have a disability may request adjustments to arrangements for their Transfer and Confirmation of Status assessments or final viva. Applications should be made using form GSO.19 (paper form found via [Student Self Service](#)). Adjustments may be requested at any point from offer of a place to submission – including when applying for Transfer of Status, Confirmation of Status, or for final viva/appointment of examiners. Students should contact [Graduate Studies](#) if they require more information.

### 5.4 TRANSFER OF STATUS

During your first year you will prepare submissions for your Transfer of Status (ToS). The Faculty regulations require that you apply for Transfer of Status in your third term (or sixth term in the case of part-time students) and no later than beginning of your fourth term (or eighth term for part-time students). **Note that the Faculty's deadline is stricter than the University's.** The Faculty's guidance has precedence over that of the University.

You are expected to **pass** (not submit for!) Transfer by the end of your fourth term, or eighth term in the case of part-time candidates. Students are allowed two attempts at Transfer. The absolute final deadline for submitting an application is **six weeks** before the Transfer is due to be completed. Applying this close to the deadline, however, carries significant risk for meeting the pass deadline if the first attempt at Transfer is not successful.

In exceptional cases the Faculty's Graduate Studies Committee may permit the candidate to postpone submission; candidates seeking such postponement must complete an application for deferral of transfer of status well in advance, and no later than six weeks before Transfer is due. The maximum extension of the probationary period within the University and Humanities Division regulations is four terms (part-time eight terms) for the successful completion of the transfer process. Again, **we expect you to apply for Transfer in your third term.**

During your probationary period you are expected to:

- Work independently under your supervisor's guidance.
- Acquire knowledge of your field, its wider intellectual context, and any necessary skills (e.g. languages, methods).
- Devise a research proposal and plan of work.
- Undertake initial research and writing.

Your supervisor may recommend that you attend classes or training sessions, and satisfactory completion may be required. You are encouraged to read and think widely and critically, both for your general intellectual development, and to ensure that you can make an effective contribution within your specific field.

You will discuss the work to submit for Transfer with your supervisor. At this stage it need not be a draft chapter of your thesis but must be of a nature to demonstrate your abilities to pursue your thesis topic.

Note that to be eligible to apply to take part in the Faculty's teaching training scheme you must have transferred successfully from the status of PRS to that of DPhil student. Therefore, it is in your best interests to Transfer as early as possible. Applications submitted after Week 0 in Trinity Term may not be examined before the long vacation.

## 5.5 PURPOSE OF TRANSFER

The purpose of Transfer of Status is to ensure that:

- You have a viable and well-structured research proposal
- You are making satisfactory progress in developing your project
- You have acquired the necessary skills to carry out the research (e.g. languages, methods)
- You satisfy the assessors that the work is potentially of DPhil quality.

More specifically, the purpose of requiring a Transfer submission is to give research projects the benefit of scrutiny at an early stage by two senior members who are not immediately invested in it. Transfer is both a formal University requirement and an opportunity for early feedback. It ensures that your project is viable and that you are prepared for doctoral-level research. It also provides valuable experience of presenting and defending your work, which is excellent preparation for the DPhil *viva voce* examination.

The key questions assessors may ask (and which you should ask yourself) are:

- Have you identified a suitable, well-informed and clearly-expressed, research question?
- Is the scope of the project appropriate to a programme of three to four years' study?
- Have you identified a suitable body of sources?
- Have you identified a research methodology appropriate for working with your sources?
- Have you acquired all the skills necessary to complete the project, or is there a clear and achievable strategy for acquiring them in the next few months?
- Can you write a scholarly piece of work that shows you can, or will be able to, reach a level of writing appropriate to a doctoral thesis?

The assessors are instructed to consider such things as whether the overall project's specific methodology is clear (e.g., either theological, historical, textual-interpretative, or social scientific), its focus sharp enough, its structure logical, and whether it promises to advance a given discussion in a significant manner (thereby making an original contribution to knowledge).

In considering the submitted sample of work, the instructors are asked to consider whether its exposition is close and nuanced, its analysis searching, its criticism judicious, and its presentation standard in style and professional in meticulousness. They are also asked to consider whether the student has or is acquiring the necessary facility in ancient and modern languages. In making their assessment, assessors should pay careful attention to the supervisor's comments, which might invite questions on particular problems.

This is a tall order by the third term of doctoral work, but rest assured that things are not set in stone at Transfer. The scope of the thesis will almost certainly be refined in the course of the research; the methodology may be adapted in the face of practical considerations and/or

further reading; the body of sources is likely to be reviewed as you progress. The important thing is that you should show evidence of having thought about the issues, that the project is viable, potentially of doctoral standard, and that you have a feasible research strategy for undertaking it.

In cases that are basically sound, the assessors will recommend approval of application, offering more or less critical advice. However, where the assessors have a number of serious concerns – such as a basic methodological or structural flaw, or a marked deficiency in an essential academic skill – they will recommend withholding approval and requiring resubmission, so as to impress upon the applicant the urgent need to correct the flaw or supply the deficiency, with a view to saving their costly failure down the line.

## 5.6 APPLICATION FORM

Both your Transfer of Status application form and Transfer work are submitted via ‘On Course Applications’ found in the ‘My Student Record’ section in [Student Self-Service](#), from where you can easily and efficiently complete and track the progress of applications.

Please submit this as early as possible so that your supervisor(s), college and faculty can complete their sections (which includes approving your assessors, nominated by your supervisor). You need to allow time for the form to be approved by the relevant people before the deadline – this can take around a week or so. To avoid unnecessary stress, do not leave this until the last minute.

The application includes sections about: subject specific research skills that you have developed, personal and professional skills which you might need as part of further development or training, and research ethics approval.

Upload your certificate of completion from the online Research Integrity course as part of this application.

Submit your work by clicking on ‘Manage documents’ (don’t forget to submit, not just upload).

## 5.7 FORMAL REQUIREMENTS FOR TRANSFER

The faculty regulations require that you apply for Transfer of Status in your third term (or sixth term in the case of part-time students).

The following documents (PDF) must be submitted to apply for Transfer of Status:

- A **fully completed Transfer of Status application**, available online via [Student Self-Service](#)
- A **detailed description, not exceeding 500 words**, which provides the proposed thesis title, research topic, outline of focal questions, how they are to be treated, and a provisional list of chapters.
- A **bibliography** indicating the works already consulted or to be consulted.
- A **piece of original written work of no more than 5000 words on the topic of the proposed thesis** (often a draft chapter), paying proper scholarly attention to primary sources, secondary discussions, and demonstrating scholarly competence in the organisation of the arguments. If the submitted work is not a draft chapter, then the

candidate should provide a clear explanation of the written work's relationship to the thesis. You should discuss your submission with your supervisor.

- **Students need to have completed the University's online research integrity training** (see Research Ethics above) before applying for transfer of status.

All materials should be submitted via eVision ([Student Self-Service](#)).

## 5.8 TIMING

### Full-time students:

- Apply in your 3rd term (Trinity Term of Year 1).
- Final deadline: Monday of Week 2 in Term 4.
- Transfer must be *completed* by the end of the 6th term (this includes any deferrals and referrals back for resubmission) or student status will lapse.

### Part-time students:

- Apply in your 6th term (Trinity Term of Year 2).
- Final deadline: Monday of Week 2 in Term 8.
- Transfer must be *completed* by the end of 12th term (this includes any deferrals and referrals back for resubmission) or student status will lapse.

**Deferrals:** In exceptional cases, the Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) may allow up to three terms of deferral. Applications for deferral must be made via the appropriate form on [Student Self-Service](#) by Week 5 of Hilary Term before the application is due.

**To note:** The Graduate Studies Committee makes every effort to process all applications received before Week 0 within the same term (including the appointment of two suitable assessors, the assessment itself, and the approval of the assessors' report). But the GSC cannot guarantee this due to academic sabbaticals and factors limiting the availability of assessors, especially with examining in Trinity Term. Whilst applications will be accepted later on during term time, their processing will inevitably be delayed.

## 5.9 THINKING ABOUT WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

See Section 10, and particularly the subsection: "Matters of Detail, Structure, and Presentation" for guidance on format, style, footnotes, bibliography, and overall presentation of submitted materials.

## 5.10 WORD COUNT

Please include the word count on your written work. For the written submissions, the word count is exclusive of bibliography, but inclusive of footnotes, glossary, appendices, and any additional material included. **Do not exceed the word limits for submitted work.** Work submitted that is over the word count may be returned to you by assessors and may delay the assessment process.

## 5.11 THE INTERVIEW/VIVA

The Graduate Studies Committee will appoint two assessors to read your written work, interview you and submit a report back to the Committee. The date will be set by the assessors in consultation with you.

The viva will normally:

- Take place before Week 8 of term (subject to teaching and research commitments).
- Last 1–2 hours.
- Focus on your written submission, research proposal, and wider project, with questions on sources, methodology, timetable, and structure.
- Include probing and sometimes sceptical questions, intended to test feasibility and strengthen your project.

You do not need to wear sub fusc. You must attend in person.

You may be invited to give a *brief* introduction to your research.

If you have any concerns about your assessors, please contact [Graduate Studies](#) or the Director of Graduate Studies; all concerns will be treated in confidence.

If you have not heard about the scheduling of your interview within six weeks after submitting your application, please contact [graduate.studies@theology.ox.ac.uk](mailto:graduate.studies@theology.ox.ac.uk).

Please note that assessors are asked not inform you of the outcome at the end of the Transfer interview. They make a recommendation to the Graduate Studies Committee, which considers the reports and makes the final decision. You should not read anything into their silence on the outcome, as they are only acting in keeping with Faculty policy.

## 5.12 OUTCOMES OF ASSESSMENT

Assessors can recommend one of the following outcomes:

- **Successful transfer**  
Your work is approved for transfer with a report that normally includes an assessment of your proposed project, makes suggestions for improvement (where appropriate), and comments on your research plan and timetable.
- **Reference back for a second attempt**  
Your assessors' report should include a detailed description of what is required in your resubmitted piece of work. This can range from better referencing of submitted work or redrafting of your proposal to significant further reading of secondary sources or rethinking the broad outlines of the project. You will be expected to submit your second attempt at Transfer of Status by Week 8 in the following term. A further oral examination will be held. The limit for confirmation to DPhil status remains the end of the sixth term (full time students).
- **Transfer to Master of Letters (MLitt)**  
This is where the assessors are firmly of the opinion that a student is unlikely to be able to produce work of DPhil standard during their time at Oxford. The MLitt requires a shorter and less substantial thesis than the DPhil. If this is recommended on the first

attempt at transfer, you have the opportunity to reapply for Transfer to DPhil Status. If transfer to MLitt status is recommended on the second attempt, you have to choose between completing an MLitt or withdrawing.

- **Failure to Progress**

An applicant who fails to satisfy the assessors after their second oral examination **will not** be permitted to proceed to the DPhil. The Graduate Studies Committee may, at its discretion, grant someone who has applied for Transfer to DPhil Student status a transfer to the lower award of MLitt status, should the assessors recommend that the project does not warrant full DPhil status.

The Transfer is a rigorous process and should not be regarded as a formality.

Most candidates pass outright, but if you are referred on the first attempt, you should not see it as an enormous setback. It is far better to address any issues about the scope, presentation, and methodology of the thesis at this stage, rather than allowing a problem to remain unresolved: this will only compound difficulties later on.

Interviewers will normally produce their report within four weeks of the interview, though this might not be possible. If you do not hear back within this period, contact [Graduate Studies](#).

### 5.13 UNSUCCESSFUL APPLICATIONS

- A candidate whose first application is not approved may make **one further application**; an extension of one term may be granted for resubmission.
- If the second application is not approved, the Faculty Board must either:
  - Approve transfer to MLitt status, or
  - Arrange for removal from the University's register.
- Candidates transferred to MLitt status at the first Transfer attempt may reapply for transfer to DPhil, provided:
  - Not more than three terms have passed since the original attempt, and
  - The supervisor supports the new application.

### 5.14 LOSS OF PROBATIONER RESEARCH STUDENT (PRS) STATUS

Candidates will lose their Probationer Research Student status if they have not gained admission to another status (e.g. DPhil or MLitt) within six terms of admission as a full-time student to the status of PRS, unless they have been granted one term's extension following an unsuccessful transfer application; or if the Faculty Board concerned deprives them of such status (after consultation with the college/hall and supervisor). If a candidate loses his or her status as a PRS and has not gained admission to another status, the candidate is no longer registered as a student of the University.

## **6. DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY CANDIDATE**

### **6.1 CONFIRMATION OF STATUS**

Confirmation of Status is a key milestone of the DPhil and students are expected to pass Confirmation by the end of their eighth term, or sixteenth term in the case of part-time candidates, from admission to PRS status. It is a formal review of your progress, with the interview normally held in your third year (full-time) or in your fifth year (part-time). Its purpose is to ensure your project is on track for timely completion and meets the standards expected of a doctoral thesis.

Application for confirmation of D.Phil. status, with endorsements by the candidate's college and supervisor, shall normally be presented no later than six weeks before Confirmation is due. In exceptional cases the Faculty's Graduate Studies Committee may permit the candidate to defer submission by one term; candidates seeking such postponement should apply for deferral well in advance, and no later than six weeks before Confirmation is due.

### **6.2 PURPOSE OF CONFIRMATION**

The Confirmation process provides independent assessment of your project by two senior academics who are not your supervisor, within 12 months of expected submission. Assessors are asked to consider points such as whether the project's:

- specific methodology is clear (e.g., either theological, historical, textual-interpretative, or social scientific),
- focus is sharp enough,
- argument is explicit and mature,
- structure is logical,
- thesis is sufficiently original, and
- successful completion within 12 months is feasible.

In considering the submitted sample of work, they are asked to consider such things as whether its exposition is close and nuanced, its analysis searching, its criticism judicious, and its grasp of the relevant literature masterful. They are expected to be especially insistent that its presentation be standard in style and highly professional in meticulousness. In making their assessment, they should pay careful attention to the supervisor's comments, which might invite questions on particular problems.

The purpose of the Confirmation of Status interview is to provide you with further feedback on the viability of your research topic and your manner of treating it, and also on the standard of your written work, in good time for you to make any necessary adjustments before completing the research and finishing the writing. The interview offers feedback on your progress and written work, helping you make final adjustments. Assessors may recommend that GSC confirm status, require resubmission, or recommend transfer to MLitt if the work is not at doctoral level.

## 6.3 FORMAL REQUIREMENTS

The Humanities Division requires students to have completed Confirmation of Status by the end of the 8th term (16<sup>th</sup> term for part-time students). **Note that the Division's deadline is stricter than the University's.** The Division's guidance has precedence over that of the University.

The Faculty regulations require that you apply for Confirmation of Status in your seventh term (or fourteenth term in the case of part-time students) after admission into the DPhil programme. But it must be submitted no later than Monday of Week 2 in the eighth term (or in the candidate's sixteenth term for part-time students). As with Transfer, later submissions carry risk as the University deadline is when Confirmation must be passed, not submitted.

The following documents (PDF) must be submitted to apply for Confirmation of Status:

- **A fully completed Confirmation of Status application**, available online via [Student Self-Service](#). The form requires detailed information about how the work is progressing, and will require you to state a projected date of completion, which you should not do without consulting your supervisor and coming to a common mind on what might reasonably be feasible.
- **A draft chapter or part of a draft chapter amounting to no more than 10,000 words\***, including footnotes and bibliography (relating to the submission), professionally presented.

Please note: it is important that the chapter or extract can be assessed as a stand-alone piece of writing, and this must be taken carefully into consideration when preparing a submission for Confirmation. Should students wish to submit part of a draft chapter, they may also provide a **brief** summary account of the missing context (which will count towards the word count), including additional bibliographic items where applicable.

\*Where there are considerable academic grounds for an extension to the 10,000 word limit, a formal written application may be submitted by student and supervisor to the Graduate Studies Committee for consideration. Such a provision will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

- **Two abstracts.** You will have to write two abstracts when you submit your thesis, one of **no more than 300 words and one of 1,500-2,500 words**. You should write drafts of both of these for the Confirmation assessment. The abstracts must be in *abstract form* and contain:
  - the argument of the thesis;
  - a statement of its significance and originality;
  - an explanation of how you are going to establish your conclusion;
  - a list of chapters and a summary of what each chapter contributes to the argument;
  - a summary of what has been completed to date and a timetable for the completion of the whole.

All materials should be submitted via eVision ([Student Self-Service](#)).

**A note concerning timing:** The Graduate Studies Committee makes every effort to process all applications received before Week 0 within the same term (including the appointment of two suitable assessors, the assessment itself, and the approval of the assessors' report). But the GSC cannot guarantee this due to academic sabbaticals and factors limiting the availability of assessors, especially with examining in Trinity Term. Whilst applications will be accepted later on during term time, their processing will inevitably be delayed.

## 6.4 FILLING IN THE APPLICATION FORM

As with Transfer of Status, both your application form and Confirmation work are submitted via 'On Course Applications' found in the 'My Student Record' section in [Student Self-Service](#), from where you can easily and efficiently complete and track the progress of applications.

Please submit this as early as possible so that your supervisor(s), college and faculty can complete their sections (which includes approving your assessors). You need to allow time for the form to be approved by the relevant people before the deadline – this can take around a week or so. To avoid unnecessary stress, do not leave this until the last minute.

Submit your work by clicking on 'Manage documents' (don't forget to submit, not just upload).

## 6.5 TIMING

### Full-time students:

- Apply by the end of Term 7 (normally Michaelmas of Year 3).
- Final deadline: Monday of Week 2 in Term 8.
- Confirmation must be passed at least 3 months before thesis submission.
- Status must be confirmed by the end of Term 8.

### Part-time students:

- Apply between Term 14 and Term 16 (normally in Term 14).
- Confirmation must be completed by the end of Term 16.

**Deferrals:** In exceptional cases, the Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) may allow one term's deferral. Applications for deferral must be made via the appropriate form via [Student Self-Service](#), at least six weeks before the due date.

*Failure to apply for Confirmation by the deadline without an approved extension may result in removal from the Register of Graduate Students.*

**Additional information:** The Faculty cannot appoint final examiners for your thesis until you have completed Confirmation of Status: a student who has not applied for confirmation at least one term before they wish to apply for appointment of examiners may find that the examination process is delayed on that account.

You will not normally be granted extensions of time for final submission unless you have completed Confirmation of Status.

## 6.6 WORD COUNT

Please include the word count on the cover page of your written work. For written submissions, the word count is exclusive of bibliography, but inclusive of footnotes, glossary, appendices, and any additional material included. Please do not exceed the word limits. Work submitted that is over the word count may be returned to you by assessors and may delay the assessment process.

## 6.7 ADJUSTMENTS TO ASSESSMENTS FOR POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENTS

Research degree students who have a disability may request adjustments to arrangements for their Transfer and Confirmation of Status assessments or final viva. Applications should be made using form GSO.19 (paper form found via [Student Self Service](#)). Adjustments may be requested at any point from offer of a place to submission – including when applying for Transfer of Status, Confirmation of Status, or for final viva/appointment of examiners. Students should contact [Graduate Studies](#) if they require more information.

## 6.8 THE INTERVIEW/VIVA

The Graduate Studies Committee will appoint two assessors to read your written work, interview you and submit a report back to the Committee. The date will be set by the assessors in consultation with you.

The viva will normally:

- Take place before Week 8 of term (subject to teaching and research commitments).
- Last 1–2 hours.
- Focus on your written submission, abstracts, and wider project, with questions on sources, methodology, structure, and timetable (completion within 12 months; or 24 months for part time)
- Include probing and sometimes sceptical questions, intended to test feasibility and strengthen your project.

You do not need to wear sub fusc. You must attend in person. You may be invited to give a *brief* introduction to your research.

If you have any concerns about your assessors, please contact [Graduate Studies](#) or the Director of Graduate Studies; all concerns will be treated in confidence.

If you have not heard about the scheduling of your interview within six weeks after submitting your application, please contact [graduate.studies@theology.ox.ac.uk](mailto:graduate.studies@theology.ox.ac.uk).

Please note that assessors are asked not inform you of their recommendation at the end of the Confirmation interview. They make a recommendation to the Graduate Studies Committee, which considers the reports and makes the final decision. You should not read anything into their silence on the outcome, as they are only acting in keeping with Faculty policy.

## 6.9 OUTCOMES OF ASSESSMENT

Assessors can recommend one of the following outcomes:

- **DPhil status confirmed**  
Your work is approved for Confirmation with a report that normally includes an assessment of your proposed project and suggestions for improvement with completion in mind (where appropriate).
- **Reference back for a second attempt**  
Your assessors' report should include a detailed description of what is required in your resubmitted piece of work. This can range from better referencing of submitted work or

redrafting of your proposal to significant further reading of secondary sources. Assessors may raise concerns about basic methodological or structural flaws or a marked deficiency in essential academic skill and will impress upon the applicant the urgent need to correct the flaw or supply the deficiency, with a view to saving them from referral or failure in the Final Examination. You will be expected to submit your second attempt at Confirmation of Status by Week 8 in the following term. A further oral examination will be held. The limit for progressing to Confirmed status remains the end of the eighth term.

- **Transfer to Master of Letters (MLitt)**

This is only where the assessors are firmly of the opinion that a student is unlikely to be able to produce work of DPhil standard during their time at Oxford. The MLitt requires a shorter and less substantial thesis than the DPhil. If this is recommended on the first attempt at Confirmation, you have the opportunity to reapply for Confirmation to DPhil Status. If transfer to MLitt status is recommended on the second attempt, you have to choose between completing an MLitt or withdrawing.

- **Failure to Progress**

An applicant who fails to satisfy the assessors after their second oral examination **will not** be permitted to proceed with the DPhil. The Graduate Studies Committee may, at its discretion, grant someone who has applied for Confirmation to DPhil Student status a transfer to the lower award of MLitt status, should the assessors recommend that the project does not warrant full DPhil status.

The Confirmation is a rigorous process and should not be regarded as a formality. Most candidates pass outright, but if you are referred on the first attempt, you should not see it as an enormous setback. It is far better to address any issues about the scope, evidence base, and methodology of the thesis at Confirmation, rather than allowing a problem to remain unresolved and struggle in the final examination/viva.

Interviewers will normally produce their report within four weeks of the interview, though this might not be possible. If you do not hear back within this period, contact [Graduate Studies](#).

## 6.10 UNSUCCESSFUL APPLICATIONS

- A candidate whose first application is not approved may make **one further application**; an extension of one term may be granted for resubmission.
- If the second application is not approved, the Faculty Board must either:
  - Approve transfer to MLitt status, or
  - Arrange for removal from the University's register.

## 6.11 APPEALS

Students who wish to contest the outcome of their transfer or confirmation assessment, either on procedural or academic grounds, should first discuss the matter with their Supervisor and/or Director of Graduate Studies. Where a concern is not satisfactorily settled by that means, the candidate, their supervisor or their college authority may make an appeal directly to the Proctors. In accordance with the University's complaints and appeals processes, the Proctors can only consider whether the procedures for reaching an academic decision were properly followed, and cannot challenge the academic judgement of the assessors.

## **7. MASTER OF LETTERS (MLitt)**

### **7.1 AIMS AND EXPECTATIONS OF THE MLITT**

- That the student possesses a good general knowledge of the field of learning within which the subject of the thesis falls;
- That the student has shown competence in investigating the chosen topic;
- That the student has made a worthwhile contribution to knowledge or understanding in the field of learning within which the subject of the thesis falls;
- That the thesis is presented in a lucid and scholarly manner;
- That it merits the award of the Degree of Master of Letters.

Examiners shall bear in mind that their judgement of the extent of the candidate's contribution to knowledge or understanding of the relevant field of learning shall take into account what may reasonably be expected of a capable and diligent student after two years of full-time study in the case of a full-time student, or twelve terms in the case of a part-time student.

### **7.2 TRANSFER FROM MASTER OF LETTERS (MLITT) TO DPhil STATUS**

An MLitt student may, with the supervisor's support, apply for transfer to DPhil student status. Normally such applications will not be considered later than a student's *ninth* term. To apply for the transfer you must submit the following:

- an online Application form for transfer of status
- submission of a draft chapter
- an abstract
- an outline of the thesis, including how much has been completed to date
- a timetable for completion

Permission for this transfer counts as confirmation of DPhil status if you have already successfully transferred from PRS status.

## 8. CHANGES AND DELAYS

Examination Regulations allow for MLitt and DPhil students to submit their thesis at the end of two years of study following their admission to that student status (for most students this is two years after Transfer of Status, but for students coming directly from the MPhil, this is two years after starting DPhil studies).

The University sets strict deadlines for completion of research degrees:

- **MLitt:** thesis must be submitted within **9 terms** of admission.
- **DPhil:** thesis must be submitted within **12 terms** of admission.

Most students complete within this timeframe. If unexpected difficulties arise, the following options are available, for which you must complete the relevant form. Most forms are online via [Student Self-Service](#), from where those which remain in paper form may also be downloaded. Please ensure you consult this page to submit the correct application form. Incorrect forms (e.g. an old paper form where an online one is available) will be returned.

For online forms, you will be directed to e-vision where you will click the tab 'My Student Record' at the top, scroll down to 'On Course Applications' and choose the relevant option (e.g. Appointment of Examiners). Once you have submitted an application, it will then automatically be forwarded to your supervisor(s), College, and the Faculty for consideration.

### 8.1 EXTENSIONS OF TIME (online application form)

- Extensions may be granted only for 'exceptional causes' of delay
- An extension is suitable for students who are near to completion, and who are able to continue to work regularly towards completion. Before applying, you should discuss with your supervisor whether extension or suspension of status is the most appropriate course.
- Maximum extensions: **up to 3 terms (MLitt)** and **up to 6 terms (DPhil; 3 for part-time)**, normally one term at a time.
- Applications require:
  - an **Extension of Time form** via [Student Self-Service](#),
  - a reasoned case for extra time,
  - a detailed and practicable timetable for completion,
  - support from your supervisor and college.
- You must apply before your time runs out or you will automatically 'lapse'.
- Retrospective applications are only approved in serious extenuating cases.
- Note: There is no entitlement to extension. The Graduate Studies Committee must be satisfied that completion is realistic within the requested period.

The Faculty's expectation will be that the thesis could be completed within the period of extension; if that does not appear to be the case, you may be advised to allow your status to lapse instead. While there are sometimes unexpected circumstances which make delays inevitable, it needs to be emphasized that the official time-limits as they stand should provide ample time for the completion of a good thesis. You should aim to complete within that time. Do not let things drag on.

## 8.2 SUSPENSION OF STATUS (online application forms)

Suspension of status is appropriate where you need to pause study, not exceeding three terms (one year) at a time. A maximum of **six terms** of suspension is permitted, except in exceptional circumstances (applications beyond the maximum time are determined by the University's Education Committee). Suspensions are granted where the student is prevented from study in circumstances which are outside their control and there are good grounds for believing that work could be resumed within a reasonable period.

You must discuss suspending studies with your supervisor before you submit an application.

This procedure requires you **not to work** or receive any supervision on your thesis for the specified period, and so does not gain you any more time in total, but allows you a period of grace to deal with non-academic problems.

In exceptional cases, it may be possible to request a retrospective suspension of studies. Retrospective suspension of status should not be used as a means of extending the time available for a student to work on their thesis. Retrospective suspension of status can usually only be considered if the end of the requested suspension period is still in the future.

Suspension of status voids any milestone examination, i.e. Transfer of Status or Confirmation of Status (whether passed or failed) completed during the term(s) for which suspension of status is granted, so please ensure that you are not requesting a suspension in the same term that you have applied for/completed one of these milestones.

Common grounds for suspension:

- Physical or mental incapacity (medical evidence required),
- maternity/paternity/adoption leave (use form Suspension of Status - Family Leave),
- unforeseeable financial difficulty,
- unexpected domestic crises,
- relevant temporary employment or study abroad which cannot be reasonably deferred.\*

\*Those holding AHRC awards must check with the conditions of their award before suspending study as AHRC grounds for suspension differ from those of the University.

During suspension:

- you are not liable for University or college fees,
- you retain your University card and access to your SSO, libraries, and email,
- no progress reports are expected from supervisors,
- you normally lose entitlement to College accommodation.

Applications: Suspension of Status **form**, or Suspension of Status - Family Leave for parental leave. Approval requires supervisor and college support.

In advance of your return, you will need to submit a Return of Suspension of Status form. If conditions were set for returning to study (such as medical evidence for fitness to study), evidence that they have been met is needed before resuming study.

### 8.3 LAPSE OF STUDY or WITHDRAWAL (online application form)

If you fail to meet Transfer, Confirmation, or Submission deadlines (including extensions), your student status will lapse and your name will be removed from the Register of Graduate Students. Lapse of status will also happen when your research will be interrupted for a longer period of time, but may be resumed later. Your student status may lapse if you are persistently out of contact with your supervisor for an extended period of time, and fail to respond to attempts to make contact with you.

Reinstatement may be possible (see below). A lapsed or withdrawn student who subsequently completes the thesis can, under certain conditions, be reinstated to enable the work to be examined.

### 8.4 REINSTATEMENT (paper form)

Students whose DPhil or MLitt status has lapsed or who have withdrawn from studies may apply for reinstatement, usually when the thesis is nearly ready for submission. Reinstatement must be granted before the thesis can be submitted for examination. Any student looking to apply for reinstatement is advised to get in touch with [Graduate Studies](#) as early as possible, in order to allow good time to complete the stages of the process. Full details of reinstatement policy and procedure are available in the Examination Regulations.

- Application: **Reinstatement form**, which is not available online and only in Word form.
- You must have completed Transfer of Status to be considered for reinstatement of study.
- Requires statements of support from your supervisor and college.
- Normally only granted (other than after withdrawal because of illness) if the thesis will be submitted within one term of reinstatement.
- If the you have been on the Register of Graduate Studies for the maximum number of terms allowed, permission to reinstate beyond the maximum number of terms requires consideration by the University's Education Committee.
- If you withdraw before the end of their fee liability you will be required on reinstatement to pay fees for the interim period.
- If more than **24 months** have passed since withdrawal, approval requires consideration by the University's Education Committee.
- Reinstatement is not an entitlement and depends on project feasibility, clear reasons for reinstatement given, and adequate supervision availability.
- Anyone contemplating this course of action is advised to withdraw in an orderly fashion, informing the Graduate Studies Committee by completing a Notification of Withdrawal form (GSO.29) and suggesting a timetable within which an application for reinstatement may be expected. This provides a framework of reasonable expectation within which future problems can be discussed. You must have the support of your supervisor and college and the approval of the Graduate Studies Committee.
- After withdrawing, you have no right of access to your former supervisor.

## 8.5 DEFERRALS OF TRANSFER OR CONFIRMATION OF STATUS (online application forms)

In exceptional circumstances, where unforeseen and unavoidable obstacles have arisen so as to delay research progress, you may apply for deferral of Transfer (up to **2 terms**) or Confirmation (up to **3 terms**), but deferrals are usually approved only one term at a time.

- Deferrals are only permitted on the **first attempt** at each milestone.
- Applications must be supported by supervisor and college and submitted via Student Self Service at least 6 weeks before the deadline.
- Applications must include a clear and detailed description of the obstacles.
- Deferral does **not** affect your final thesis submission deadline (or Confirmation deadline if Transfer is deferred).

## 8.6 OTHER CHANGES

All changes/applications should be discussed with your supervisor before applying.

- **Change of Thesis Title:** Apply via **Change of Thesis Title online form**. Requests must be made **at least one term before submission**. Title changes cannot be approved once examiners are appointed. It is particularly important that the title under which you propose to submit your thesis is precisely that which the Committee has already approved.
  - Exceptions to this application include at Transfer where you may put your new title on the **Transfer of Status** form.
- **Change of Supervisor:** Apply via **Change of Supervisor or appointment of joint supervisor form**. This form is for changing supervisors or applying to add a co-supervisor. You may also seek advice from your College, [Graduate Studies](#), or the DGS if difficulties arise. Any difficulties with your supervisor should, if possible, be raised with them in the first instance.
- **Change of Study Mode:** One change between full- and part-time status is permitted during the course of your degree, in exceptional circumstances. Apply via **Change to mode of study form**, which requires supervisor, college, and DGS support.

## 8.7 VISA CONSIDERATIONS

If you are on a Student visa, suspensions or withdrawals may affect your visa. You must seek advice from [Graduate Studies](#) and [Student Immigration team](#) before applying.

## 8.8 CONTINUATION CHARGES

- Once fee liability ends, students pay a termly **continuation charge** (details of rates are on the [Continuation Charges page](#)). Fees will usually increase annually.
- Colleges may also charge continuation fees – check with your College.

## 8.9 KEY FORMS

Most forms are available online via [Student Self-Service](#) and on the [Graduate forms page](#). These include:

### Examination forms

- Transfer of Status (GSO.2)
- Confirmation of Status (GSO.14)
- Adjustments to Assessment Arrangements (paper form) (GSO.19)
- Appointment of Examiners (GSO.3)

### Other Application forms

- Dispensation from Consultations of Thesis (GSO.3c)
- Change of Thesis Title (GSO.6)
- Dispensation from Statutory Residence (current students) (GSO.8)
- Change of Supervisor or Appointment of a Joint Supervisor (GSO.25)

### Changes of circumstances

- Change to Mode of Study (GSO.4)
- Deferral of Transfer of Status (GSO.2b)
- Deferral of Confirmation of Status (GSO.14b)
- Extension of Time (GSO.15)
- Suspension of Status / Return from Suspension (GSO.17/ 17a)
- Suspension of Status for Maternity/Extended Paternity/Adoption Leave (GSO.17b)
- Extension of Time for Minor or Major Corrections (paper form) (GSO.18)
- Reinstatement (paper form) (GSO.23)
- Withdrawal (GSO.29)

## 9. ACADEMIC PROGRESS

### 9.1 YOUR SUPERVISOR(S)

When you were admitted to Oxford you were allocated a supervisor(s) with general expertise in your area of research and their role is to guide and support you in all aspects of your research. It will be normal for your ideas to change in some ways from your initial research proposal as you investigate the evidence and develop your project under direction from your supervisor(s). The Humanities Division has developed [codes of practice](#) for postgraduate research supervision that set out in more detail the expectations of supervisors and students.

Any student being supervised by someone outside the Faculty also requires a supervisor within the Faculty who is familiar with our procedures and requirements. The co-supervision of research students is practiced across the University, but one supervisor will normally be designated primary supervisor. The sharing of supervisory roles can vary, but you should expect that at an early stage in your research your supervisors will clarify the supervisory relationship and establish expectations about regular meetings and review of work.

An effective relationship with good communication between you and your supervisor(s) is key to the smooth progress of your DPhil; with both fulfilling the roles expected of them. Your supervisor(s) has responsibilities which they should meet – as do you as a research student. Below is an outline of responsibilities for supervisors and students which is taken from the University's [Policy and Guidance on Research Degrees](#).

Your supervisor(s) can be expected to:

- Advise, guide and support you in all aspects of your research, providing clear intellectual leadership and giving precise guidance about academic expectations.
- Agree with you a clear plan of research, identify milestones and provide information on the availability of research resources
- Agree with you a timetable for regular meetings (normally twice per term) for detailed discussion of your progress
- Request the submission of written work, which the supervisor should return to you within a reasonable time
- Liaise with you to produce a detailed report on your progress at the end of each term.
- Ensure that you are aware of the formal requirements for transfer of status, confirmation of status and final submission, and that these are incorporated into your plan of work.
- Discuss with you subject-specific and general research skills required for your doctoral studies; work with you to identify areas where you require additional training to develop these and other skills; advise you on how these needs may be met, and assess your skills development and training requirements at least once a year.
- Assist and encourage you to participate in the wider academic community.
- Ensure that you are aware of relevant University guidelines and regulations, e.g. Student Handbook, Examination Regulations, guidance on plagiarism, and Lecture Lists.

Your supervisor(s) can expect that you:

- Attend induction sessions arranged by the faculty, Library Services and Computing Services.
- Meet with them regularly and take note of their advice and guidance.
- Draw up a research plan and timetable of work in consultation with your Supervisor, and to keep relevant records of all aspects of your work.
- Liaise with them to produce a detailed report on your progress at the end of each term.
- Work with them to draw up a programme for identifying and developing your subject-specific and general research skills, and personal and professional skills.
- Attend appropriate classes, lectures, and seminars.
- Be aware of relevant University guidelines and regulations, e.g. student handbook, Examination Regulations, guidance on plagiarism, and of any ethical or legal issues, health and safety requirements, or intellectual property issues arising from your research.
- Work with them to pursue opportunities to engage with the wider academic community at University, national and international level.

## 9.2 RESOLVING ISSUES

If you have any issues with academic matters, whether teaching or supervision, please raise these as soon as possible so that they can be addressed promptly. There are a variety of ways in which this can be done:

- Consult your Supervisor, who may consult the necessary authorities on your behalf;
- Consult your Senior Tutor, Tutor for Graduates, or College Advisor/Tutor;
- Consult the Academic Administrator (Graduate Studies) or the Senior Academic Administrator in the Faculty;
- Communicate with the Director of Graduate Studies in the Faculty;
- Consult your elected graduate representatives, who are willing to give what help and advice they can.

Please consult the Complaints and Appeals section for information about the procedures adopted by the Proctors for the consideration of any formal complaints and appeals made.

## 9.3 COLLEGE ADVISOR

Your college will have a Tutor for Graduates who has general responsibility for your welfare and whom you should approach in the first instance with any non-academic difficulties or questions. You should also be assigned a 'college advisor', an academic within the college who is also familiar with your broad subject area but usually not directly responsible for supervising you. This person can act as a 'go between' or bridge between the Faculty and the college, in terms of your academic and personal welfare.

## 9.4 GRADUATE SUPERVISION REPORTING (GSR)

At the end of each term (Weeks 6–7) and in the Long Vacation, you will be asked to submit a self-assessment report on your academic progress through the Graduate Supervision Reporting (GSR) system, accessed via [Student Self Service](#).

You will receive an automated email when the reporting window opens, and another when your supervisor(s) or Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) has completed their part of the report.

## Your Role

You are strongly encouraged to complete a self-assessment every reporting period. If you do not report, this will be commented on by the DGS and may limit the report given by your supervisor. If issues arise at any point in your degree, your reports will be key if evidence is needed to support an unexpected extension, suspension, or change of status.

These reports also afford the opportunity to:

- Review and comment on your academic progress.
- Measure your progress against your programme timetable and requirements.
- Identify skills developed, training undertaken, and training still needed.
- Record your academic engagement (seminars, conferences, teaching).
- Outline plans for the next term (where relevant).
- Flag any concerns about your academic progress with your supervisor and Faculty.

## Your Supervisor's Role

Supervisor(s) will:

- Review your progress and performance during the term.
- Assess skills and training needs for the next stage.
- Provide feedback on areas requiring further work.
- Comment on your progress against agreed timetables and plans.
- Flag any concerns.

Your self-assessment provides the basis for this feedback.

## Oversight

- The Director of Graduate Studies monitors all reports to ensure appropriate supervision is taking place and academic progress is being made
- College advisors are also notified of reports, including any concerns raised.

## Important Notes

- GSR is **not** a complaints mechanism. If you have concerns about your supervision, raise them directly with your College and/or DGS.
- If you are unable to complete your self-assessment, speak to your supervisor or DGS promptly.
- Guidance is available in the online GSR Help Centre.

## **10. WRITING YOUR THESIS**

### **10.1 WHAT CONSTITUTES A THESIS?**

According to the Examination Regulations, a DPhil thesis requires that the candidate: 'has made a significant and substantial contribution in the particular field of learning within which the thesis falls'. The expectation is that it represents 'what may reasonably be expected of a capable and diligent student after three, or at most four, years of full-time study'.

The thesis should be driven by a research question. This is not the same as a 'subject' or 'topic' which simply stakes out a field of enquiry; the research question is the means by which that field is interrogated.

### **10.2 ABSTRACTS**

The submitted thesis should be accompanied by a short abstract not exceeding 300 words, and a longer abstract not exceeding 1,500 words (for the MLitt) and 2,500 words (for the DPhil).

The shorter abstract of the thesis should concisely summarise its scope and principal arguments. The purpose of the longer abstract is to make clear to the examiners, before they read the thesis, what questions or problems you have set out to engage, how you have approached them, and where you believe the originality of your thesis to lie.

Although this abstract will inevitably summarise the content of the thesis, it should not be a mere summary or synopsis. Rather it should be an attempt to describe your own work: what you have tried to do, why the effort was worth making, where you think you have succeeded. It should indicate, very briefly, the state of the question at the time, should explain the method you have adopted, and should give a very brief synopsis of the content and conclusions of the thesis.

The abstracts are best written independently, after the thesis is complete and corrected and you can view your own work, as it were, from outside and as a whole. One copy of the abstracts prepared at the time of the examination should be included within the pdf file of your thesis. Further information about the requirements for abstracts can be found in the edition of the Examination Regulations for the year in which the thesis is presented for examination.

Abstracts are excluded from the final word count of the thesis submission.

Copies of both abstracts shall be included in the copy of the thesis which shall be deposited in the Bodleian Library.

### **10.3 MATTERS OF DETAIL, STRUCTURE, AND PRESENTATION**

The Faculty Board imposes very few regulations on formatting your work for milestone applications.

The thesis must be presented in a lucid and scholarly manner. This means the thesis must be clearly structured, with an introduction, conclusion and two abstracts. It must develop a

sustained argument and be written in fluent, accurate and scholarly prose. Careful proof-reading is essential to avoid receiving a long list of minor or major corrections from the examiners or criticism of an 'incomplete' submission. Students are strongly advised to take great care over English grammar and style. Supervisors should not be expected to give time to correcting such matters. Their concern is properly with academic method, content, and coherence.

Students writing a thesis should give consideration to the following matters: the practice of underlining, italics, and the use of quotation marks; the form of abbreviations; the use of capital letters; the form of dates and of references to books and articles; and the ordering of footnotes. The Faculty Board does not lay down regulations covering these points but you are expected to handle them in a clear, neat and consistent fashion, in conformity with generally accepted practice.

Simplicity and directness of style are desirable. Technical vocabulary, where it has to be used, should always be carefully explained so that examiners and other readers are left in no doubt about the sense in which the writer is using it. Every care should be taken to ensure the standard style, uniformity, and accuracy of references.

A good thesis can be spoilt by lack of attention to detail in the final stages of completion (and, in reality, for any of the milestone assessment submissions). Since technical proficiency and rigorous carefulness are essential to good scholarship, examiners may decide to refer a piece of work that does not display them.

## 10.4 EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES

If you have a disability that may affect your thesis, this needs to be considered at the time that you are writing your thesis. There are a number of measures that can be put in place to support you whilst writing your thesis and these can be discussed with the Disability Advisory Service and your department/college disability advisors. These measures could include extensions of time for milestones, assistive technology, use of a proof reader etc.

By the time you submit your thesis no further consideration of the disability for the written work is appropriate, as you will have been given sufficient support so that your thesis can be examined under the same academic criteria as those theses submitted by students without a disability.

## 10.5 SPACING AND PAGINATION

The regulations require that, unless the Board of the Faculty has excused the student from this requirement, a thesis for the degree of DPhil or MLitt must be word-processed with:

- **Margins:** 3–3.5 cm on the left-hand side.
- **Spacing:** main text double-spaced; quotations and footnotes single-spaced.
- **Font size:** at least 11 pt for main text, 10 pt for footnotes.
- **Pagination:** pages must be numbered consecutively from start to finish, including appendices, etc. Cross-references should include accurate page numbers.

It is your responsibility to ensure that the print of your thesis is of an adequate definition and standard for legibility, and that guidance is followed to avoid problems at submission.

## 10.6 FOOTNOTES

Footnotes should normally be placed at the bottom of each page. Notes at the bottom of the page to which they refer are easier to read and check. All footnotes should be typed in single spacing. Where they are given at the end of each chapter or at the end of the thesis, a separate pdf of footnotes should be uploaded to the Research Digital Thesis Submissions (RTDS) application under “Additional Materials”, for the convenience of the examiners.

## 10.7 REFERENCING/CITATION STYLE and BIBLIOGRAPHY

Since the preparation of bibliographies in theses is frequently a source of difficulty, the following further comments are offered. It is wise to record bibliographic details carefully as you go, to avoid difficulties at the end.

The Faculty expects written work to be carefully and consistently presented in accordance with one of several standard styles. The chosen style should govern such matters as spelling, abbreviations, punctuation, quotations, footnotes, bibliographical references and other aspects of scholarly presentation. Students are advised to consult with their supervisors about the standard style most appropriate for them, bearing in mind that some styles entail a higher word count than others.

Students of biblical studies may choose to follow *The SBL Handbook of Style for Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), which is available for consultation in the Faculty library and on SOLO.

Other students may choose to follow the Oxford style (New Oxford Style Manual [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016]) or the Chicago style (Kate A. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses and Dissertations, Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*, 7th edition [Chicago: University of Chicago, 2007]. Students may also use other standard referencing styles, as long as referencing is clear and consistent throughout their submitted work.

The bibliography is a functional part of a thesis. It is not a mere list of matter read, nor, *a fortiori*, of matter unread. The bibliography in a thesis should list all sources used. Printed sources should be listed alphabetically, by surname of author.

The bibliography may be subdivided into (a) primary sources and (b) secondary sources, or in a way that best represents the types of sources consulted (e.g. manuscripts).

## 10.8 USE OF MPhil IN DPhil THESIS

Students who have completed the MPhil may continue to build their doctoral thesis on the same research basis. In some cases, the research basis of the MPhil may not lead to any significant repetition of the prose submitted in the MPhil thesis. In other cases, it may be appropriate to use work written from the MPhil thesis. In such cases, there should be no overlap in actual content of the of the thesis with previous written work, as outlined in the University’s [guidance on plagiarism](#), (which includes Auto-Plagiarism).

## 11. GOOD ACADEMIC PRACTICE AND AVOIDING PLAGIARISM

### 11.1 PLAGIARISM

Academic work should strive to excel in two areas: analysis should be clearly structured and rigorously documented, and your referencing should ensure that your scholarly integrity is beyond reproach by readily acknowledging where you refer to the ideas of fellow scholars.

Plagiarism is presenting someone else's work or ideas as your own, with or without their consent, by incorporating it into your work without full acknowledgement. All published and unpublished material, whether in manuscript, printed or electronic form, is covered under this definition. Plagiarism may be intentional or reckless, or unintentional. Under the regulations for examinations, intentional or reckless plagiarism is a disciplinary offence. For an extensive, binding and regularly updated definition of plagiarism and the seriousness with which the University views the practice, please see the Oxford Student's website [guidance on plagiarism](#).

There are different [types of plagiarism](#) and you should familiarise yourself with each of them. You may benefit from taking an [online course](#) which has been developed to provide a useful overview of the issues surrounding plagiarism and practical ways to avoid it.

If plagiarism is suspected in your thesis, the matter will be referred to the relevant Director of Graduate Studies (DGS). They will thoroughly investigate the claim and may call you for interview. As part of the investigation, text-matching software such as iThenticate or TurnItIn may be used to scan the thesis. If at this point there is no evidence of a breach of the regulations, no further disciplinary action will be taken although you still may be required to make changes to your thesis. However, if it is concluded that a breach of the regulations may have occurred, the DGS will refer the matter to the Proctors.

The University has a set policy regarding the use of third-party proof-readers. The details of what is and isn't permitted under this policy can be found [here](#).

### 11.2 GUIDANCE ON AI

The principles that follow are intended to be neither comprehensive nor definitive. This is a rapidly evolving field, and we anticipate that this guidance will be updated at regular intervals. It is also important that it is read in conjunction with the other documents to which it provides links. Students should also refer to their tutors or supervisors on any specific issues regarding the use of AI.

The Faculty cautions students against the uncritical use of generative AI. In particular, the use of AI tools to prepare written texts, will result in texts that will be bland, impersonal, and may contain rogue references (hallucinations, as they are often termed) to non-existent sources or works. It is therefore essential that students approach it as a critical tool, much as they would any other resource. The most important tool however is their own intelligence.

See also the University's [Policy on AI Use in Summative Assessment](#).

## 12. SUBMISSION OF YOUR THESIS FOR EXAMINATION

### 12.1 SUBMISSION OF THESIS and APPOINTMENT OF EXAMINERS

Presentation guidance is detailed in the Writing Your Thesis section above. Confirmation of D.Phil. status must have been approved prior to submission.

In preparation for submission, students must allow adequate time for writing up the thesis, taking the advice of the supervisor. Particular attention should be paid to final proof-reading. Students should also be made aware that they must ensure that the standard of their English is sufficient for the presentation of a thesis.

Students and supervisors should be aware that it is the student's responsibility to decide whether to submit the thesis for examination, after taking due account of the supervisor's opinion. It is in the student's interests to ensure that the final version has been made available to the supervisor for final comment in good time before the intended date of submission.

When the thesis is ready for submission, you apply for the appointment of examiners using the online **Application for the Appointment of Examiners** (via [Student Self Service](#)).

- The thesis may be submitted simultaneously with the form applying for appointment of examiners. Alternatively, you may apply for examiners in advance of submitting the thesis, proposing a date of submission, which should be not more than three months' distant, *and which will then be binding*. This may shorten the overall time taken for the examination.
- You may at the same time need to apply to modify your title, so that it accurately conveys the scope of the finished thesis.
- Your supervisor will propose to the Graduate Studies Committee two qualified people to act as your examiners along with two alternatives. You have a right to be consulted by your supervisor about this. The final decision rests with the Faculty Board which appoints the examiners and is not bound by your supervisor's suggestions.
- You may request to have the *viva voce* examination before a certain date if, for example, you have to return home to another continent or take up a new post. Examiners can, however, reasonably expect three months in which to read the thesis. Your request should be sensible, and though it will be considered sympathetically, there is no undertaking to comply with it. Candidates should be aware that the examination date requested should not be earlier than one calendar month after the date on which the thesis has been received at the Examination Schools, or after the date on which the examiners have formally agreed to act, whichever is the latest.
- Within about a month after you have been notified of the appointment of your examiners, you should be advised by them of the date of your *viva voce* examination. If you have heard nothing in this time, contact the Research Degree Examinations Office at the Examination Schools.

Your thesis must be submitted online via the 'My Research Degrees' tab in Student Self Service.

The thesis must be saved as a PDF file, and any additional files (e.g. recordings, images or annexes) should be saved as a single zip file and uploaded under “Additional Documents”. Your thesis should contain a short abstract not exceeding 300 words, and a longer abstract normally not exceeding 1,500 words for a MLitt and 2,500 words for a DPhil.

Theses submitted for the Degree of DPhil should not exceed 100,000, excluding only the bibliography and abstracts. Please note that appendices may NOT be used for commentary or additional prose. Students are advised to consult their supervisors on the use of an appendix. Any appendices are part of the word limit.

You must submit your digital examiners’ copy of your thesis online, via the 'My Research Degrees' tab in Student Self Service, by **11:59pm (UK time)** on your maximum submission date (Students who are funded by a Research Council must submit by the deadline imposed by that body).

You should not contact examiners directly unless requested to do so by a formally appointed examiner in relation to the process of arranging a viva date. Furthermore, you should not submit a copy of your thesis directly to the examiners; they must be examined from the formal copy sent to the examiner by the Research Degree Examination Office. This is to ensure that there is a definitive version of a thesis, which is the subject of the examination.

### **Further guidance**

Comprehensive information concerning the submission of the final thesis, and the various processes, including the appointment of examiners submitting the Bodleian library copy can be found here: <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams/research>.

## **12.2 WORD LIMITS**

Theses submitted for the Degree of M.Litt. should not exceed 50,000 words, or 100,000 for the D.Phil., excluding only the abstracts and the bibliography in both cases. Candidates are advised that submissions are expected not to fall very short of these limits. MLitt and DPhil candidates must state the approximate number of words when submitting their thesis.

Short abstracts should not exceed 300 words; long abstracts must be between 1,000 and 1,500 words for an M.Litt., and between 1,500 and 2,500 for a D.Phil.

Any thesis exceeding these limits may be rejected on that ground.

## **12.3 APPLYING TO EXCEED THE WORD LIMIT**

DPhil and MLitt students are expected to adhere to the word limits on their theses and leave to exceed these limits will only be given in exceptional circumstances. Any application to exceed the word limits should be sought through the completion of a Word Count Exemption Request, which should be made before the submission of either the Appointment of Examiners application or the thesis itself. Such an application would need to demonstrate clear academic reasons for including additional material in the thesis, and would require strong support from the student’s supervisor.

## 13. EXAMINATION OF YOUR THESIS

### 13.1 THE VIVA

Once your examiners have been appointed and received your thesis, you will be notified of their names. The examiners are expected to arrange the date of the *viva voce* examination as soon as practicable (even if the actual date is a number of weeks or months ahead) and to notify the student formally of the date, time and place.

You are requested to:

- present yourself punctually at the viva
- wear academic dress at the *viva voce* examination (sub-fusc), with the exception of when an examination is conducted remotely.
- bring a copy of your thesis with you, or a digital copy in the case of remote vivas.

The date and place of the examination will be published in the Gazette. The examination is open to members of the University wearing full academic dress, though they are expected, as a matter of courtesy, to let the student and the examiners know beforehand if they intend to be present and in practice it is rare that others attend in this way.

The length of the examination is at the examiners' discretion, but is usually between one and two hours.

The examiners are not permitted to inform the candidate at the *viva voce* examination, or the supervisor subsequently, what their recommendation will be. Therefore, you should attach no significance to the examiners' silence on this point. It is important to remember that examiners are making recommendations to the Faculty Board, with which the final decision rests.

The examiners of a DPhil thesis are required to certify that:

- the student possesses a good general knowledge of the particular field of learning within which the subject of his thesis falls;
- the student has made a significant and substantial contribution in the particular field of learning within which the subject of the thesis falls;
- the thesis is presented in a lucid and scholarly manner; and
- the student has presented a satisfactory abstract of the thesis.

The examiners for an MLitt thesis are required to certify that:

- the student possesses a good general knowledge of the field of learning within which the subject of the thesis falls;
- the student shows competence in investigating the chosen topic;
- the student has made a worthwhile contribution to knowledge or understanding in the field of learning within which the subject of the thesis falls; and
- the results have been presented in a lucid and scholarly manner.

The table summary of the overall process for the arrangement and conduct of research degree examinations can also be found online [here](#). It is important that this process is followed in all cases (especially during re-submissions).

## 13.2 OUTCOMES

The recommendations open to examiners are set out in detail in the Examination Regulations: [Research Degrees in Theology and Religion \(ox.ac.uk\)](https://www.ox.ac.uk/research-degrees-examinations-outcomes).

The examiners' recommendation following the first examination of a thesis may be one of the following options (all options may be found in the Policy and Guidance on Research Degrees, [extracts on Examinations Outcomes](#)). See also Appendices A and B of this Handbook.

- **Award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy;**  
If your examiners can recommend that the degree should be awarded and the thesis can be deposited in the Bodleian, then the examiners will submit their report to the Faculty without undue delay. Once the Faculty has endorsed the recommendation, the Research Degrees Examinations Team will send you the Leave to Supplicate letter as well as a copy of the examiners' report.
- **Award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, after minor corrections;**  
If your examiners are satisfied that they can recommend that the degree should be awarded, but minor corrections need to be made before the thesis can be deposited in the Bodleian, then the completed minor corrections must be approved, usually by the internal examiner, before the examiners make their report to the Faculty. In that case, your examiners will provide you with a list of the required corrections. If you have not received the list of corrections within two weeks of the viva, then you should contact [Graduate Studies](#). The University expects that these minor corrections will be completed to the satisfaction of your internal examiner within two months of being issued. If you fail to complete your corrections within the time allowed your name will be removed from the Graduate Register and a reinstatement application will be required.
- **Potentially award the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, after major corrections (and, if requested, a mandatory viva);**  
If your examiners are satisfied that they can recommend that the degree should be awarded subject to the completion and review of major corrections, and the Faculty endorses this recommendation, then these major corrections must be completed and reviewed by both examiners, who will produce a second report for the Faculty. A copy of the Examiners' Report with the required corrections will be sent to you by the Research Degrees Examinations Team, following approval by the relevant Board. The University expects that these major corrections will be completed to the satisfaction of your examiners within six months of being issued. Your examiners may wish to hold a second viva examination before producing their final report for the Faculty. If you fail to complete your corrections within the time allowed your name will be removed from the Graduate Register and a reinstatement application will be required.
- **Student Choice: To Reference back for further work on the thesis and re-examination or award of the MLitt as the thesis stands;**  
If your examiners are not satisfied that the thesis as a whole is of sufficient merit to qualify for the degree, they are required to refer the thesis for revision and resubmission. In rare cases, they may indicate that they are unable to propose how the thesis could be changed to reach the required standard in the 12 months allowed for revision. The Faculty will review their recommendation, and, once the Faculty has

endorsed the recommendation, the Research Degrees Examinations Team will inform you about the outcome of the examination and the procedures for a resubmission of your thesis.

When you are re-submitting a thesis you should follow the same procedures detailed above for submission of a DPhil, except that you will need to pay the required [re-submission fee](#). Candidates resubmitting a thesis must also include a separate report indicating the specific changes made to the thesis for resubmission. For students in the Humanities, the word limit for the accompanying report is 1,000 words.

It is possible for you and your supervisor to propose new examiners at the time of re-submission, but it is usual for the previous examiners to be proposed since of course it is according to their guidelines that you have been revising your thesis.

Technically, a re-submission is a fresh examination, and you should remember that the oral examination is not necessarily restricted to points noted in the original examination. Examiners are still required to satisfy themselves that the revised thesis as a whole is of sufficient merit to qualify for the degree, and that you possess a good general knowledge of the particular field of learning within which the subject of your thesis lies.

The report on the first examination will automatically be sent to the examiners of the re-submitted thesis. This is to ensure that the examiners are aware of the background to the revisions which you have made. If you wish to make a case for this not happening, permission must be sought from the Proctors.

If a thesis is resubmitted after revision, the examiners may recommend any of the following options:

- award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (as stands, or with corrections);
- award of the MLitt as the thesis stands;
- reference back for further work and re-examination or award of the MLitt only;
- reference back for further work and re-examination for MLitt;
- no award (fail).

The Faculty Board's decision will be conveyed in writing by the Graduate Studies Administrator.

The outcome types, time limits for changes, and report lengths for the DPhil are summarised as follows:

| Outcome           | Time limit for changes | Report of changes with resubmission |
|-------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Minor corrections | 2 months               | N/A                                 |
| Major corrections | 6 months               | N/A                                 |
| Referral back     | 12 months              | 1000 words                          |

### 13.3 SUPERVISION FOLLOWING EXAMINATION

Students whose outcome is minor corrections (for DPhil and MLitt) should expect to receive supervisory guidance on the changes required to facilitate a successful resubmission of their thesis.

Students who receive a major corrections outcome either with or without a mandatory viva, or a reference back decision should expect a similar level of supervision as they had prior to the examination. This should be with the explicit purpose of supporting the student to complete the necessary work as detailed in the examination report.

Students should not expect to receive supervision while suspended.

### 13.4 NOTIFICATION OF RESULTS

Students for the degrees of MLitt and DPhil will be notified of the result of their examination after the Faculty has considered the report of the examiners, and the examiners' report has been sent to the Examination Schools.

### 13.5 ADJUSTMENTS TO ASSESSMENTS FOR POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENTS

Research degree students who have a disability may request adjustments to arrangements for their Transfer and Confirmation of Status assessments or final viva. Applications should be made using form GSO.19 (paper form found via [Student Self Service](#)). Adjustments may be requested at any point from offer of a place to submission – including when applying for Transfer of Status, Confirmation of Status, or for final viva/appointment of examiners. Students should contact [Graduate Studies](#) if they require more information.

### 13.6 DEPOSITING YOUR THESIS

All students following the DPhil, MLitt or MSc (by Research) who registered for the DPhil from 1 October 2007 onwards, are required to deposit a digital copy of their thesis with the Bodleian Libraries. This is done through the [Oxford Research Archive](#) (ORA), which is an online archive of research output including theses created in fulfilment of Oxford awards, produced by graduate students at the University of Oxford. ORA provides maximum visibility and digital preservation for Oxford digital theses.

Once you receive leave to supplicate, the Regulations require that a copy of your thesis must be deposited with the ORA a minimum of five working days prior to your graduation date. Please be aware that this is a condition for award of the degree and it is enforced - students will not be able to attend a degree ceremony (even in absentia) without doing so. Information regarding this process will be sent with your result letter, and is available in the [online ORA guide](#) on submitting your thesis, which includes:

- Legal requirements (including funder mandates) and author responsibilities;
- When to deposit the digital copy of your thesis;
- How to deposit the digital copy of your thesis;
- Options for open access and embargos. Theses, or parts of theses, can be embargoed for

reasons such as sensitive content, material that would affect commercial interests, pre-publication or legal reasons.

- Information about file formats, fonts and file sizes.

The copy to be deposited to ORA should contain any corrections or amendments which the examiners may require. For further information on preparation and submission, please see document GSO.20a on the [Graduate Forms webpage](#).

### **13.7 THIRD PARTY COPYRIGHT**

Copyright of the thesis usually rests with the author: this does not change when depositing your thesis in ORA. The author does not give away any rights to the Oxford University Research Archive or the Bodleian Libraries. If material has been incorporated within the thesis where copyright is held by an individual or group that is not the author (third party copyright) permission will be needed to make such material freely available on the Internet. It is best to obtain such permission when sourcing the material. Proof of permission will need to be provided when depositing the thesis in ORA (e.g. e-mail or letter).

Authors should contact ORA staff ([ORA@bodleian.ox.ac.uk](mailto:ORA@bodleian.ox.ac.uk)) if they are unsure. Further information or queries about depositing digital theses should be addressed to [ORA@bodleian.ox.ac.uk](mailto:ORA@bodleian.ox.ac.uk).

### **13.8 HUMANITIES DIVISION – RESTRICTED ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS**

Whilst the Humanities Division strongly supports open access to, and wide dissemination of, theses produced by its students, access to the full text of digital theses can be restricted unless requirements of funding bodies require open access to be provided earlier (see below). When completing the ORA online deposit form authors should therefore indicate whether they would like an embargo (currently a choice of one year or three years), or wish to make their thesis available immediately, for example, if the author's funding specifies an earlier release date.

There is no need to complete a separate application for Dispensation from Consultation at the time of deposit.

If an embargo is chosen at the time of deposit, only the following information from your thesis will be available in ORA for the duration of the embargo:

- Item record (details including your name, thesis title, subject area)
- Abstract
- Full text search for single words or short passages of text.

Authors can also choose to override any requested embargo and make their thesis open access, either at the time of deposit or at any time during the embargo. Authors who wish to make their thesis freely available on deposit should indicate this on the online ORA deposit form.

Once the embargo is in place, students wishing to end it early should e-mail [ora@bodleian.ox.ac.uk](mailto:ora@bodleian.ox.ac.uk). It is not recommended for those planning to publish their research as a book or article to make their thesis openly available in ORA without first discussing this matter with their supervisor and consulting potential publishers to ascertain their policy. The embargo

will be automatically lifted when it expires, and it is the responsibility of the author to apply for an extension, prior to expiry, if required. No reminder will be sent by the Department/Faculty, the Bodleian Libraries or ORA staff, and it will be assumed that the full text can be released if a Dispensation from Consultation application (GSO.3C) is not submitted.

If you are in receipt of research funding the following may apply: The Terms and Conditions of Research Council Training Grants require that metadata describing the thesis should be lodged in ORA as soon as possible after leave to supplicate has been granted, and for the full text version to be available within a maximum of twelve months. The Division has therefore agreed that the full-text of RCUK-funded students' theses should be made available within one year of leave to supplicate being granted. Students funded by any other external body should be aware of, and also abide by, the terms and conditions for open access defined by their funder. Where there are discrepancies, the funding body's requirements should supersede any embargo preferred by the student at the point of deposit.

### **13.9 DISPENSATION FROM CONSULTATION OF YOUR THESIS**

Authors may apply for dispensation from consultation beyond the end of an embargo period (or other period specified by their funding body) of the copy of the thesis deposited in the Bodleian or other University Library and/or of the electronic copy of the thesis deposited in ORA if there is good reason for such a request. Reasons for requesting dispensation might include Intellectual Property considerations: that consultation or reproduction would put at risk confidential material or invalidate an application for a patent on a product or process described in a thesis. Students are advised to be particularly mindful of the terms of any agreements with an outside body or sponsor governing supply of confidential material or the disclosure of research results described in the thesis.

Dispensation will always be granted (a) in cases where confidentiality has been made a condition of access to materials that are subsequently incorporated in a thesis and (b) for material where copyright is held by a third party and permission to disseminate it via the Internet has not been granted by the copyright holder.

Current students should apply for dispensation by completing the online application from available from [Student Self-Service](#). If you need to apply for a dispensation having completed your course, you should apply for dispensation by completing the Dispensation from Consultation of Thesis form available at [Graduate Forms](#).

Dispensation from consultation is granted by the Faculty not the Bodleian Libraries or ORA staff. If you need any help with progression forms, please contact [Graduate Studies](#).

### **13.10 JOURNAL ARTICLES INCLUDED WITHIN THE THESIS**

Authors sometimes include published journal articles within their theses. Authors needing to include such articles as part of the e-thesis can make the article freely available only in compliance with copyright and any sponsor permissions.

### **13.11 OXFORD THEOLOGICAL MONOGRAPHS SERIES**

Those who complete doctorates in the Faculty are eligible to have their doctoral theses considered for publication in the Oxford Theological Monographs series. The series stands alongside others managed by Humanities Faculties in the University. Volumes are produced to the highest publication standards of Oxford University Press, and although print runs are limited, publication in the series ensures authors a distinguished academic debut on a worldwide stage.

The series is run by a Committee of the Faculty Board, charged with the responsibility of choosing doctoral theses of exceptional merit undertaken within the Faculty, and reporting to the Delegates of the University Press. It meets formally three times a year, receiving Examiners' Reports on all successful DPhil candidates in Theology and Religion. Examiners in Theology are required to comment in their reports on the suitability of a thesis for publication whether in the form of a monograph or in articles. Currently the series publishes three or four monographs a year.

## 14. OPPORTUNITIES

### 14.1 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Faculty's Director of Graduate Professional Development is [Dr Rachel Cresswell](#). With the help of the Director of Graduate Studies, Dr Cresswell organizes a regular programme of training in subject-specific and transferable skills.

The training takes the form of lunchtime workshops held in the Faculty, aimed at equipping you with the necessary skills for success in your graduate studies and supporting you as you prepare for the next steps. Workshops include topics such as:

**Getting into...**the DPhil/PhD

**Getting through...**Transfer/Confirmation of Status

**Getting ahead...**in the academic job market

**Getting published...**for academic and popular audiences

### 14.2 FACULTY GRADUATE TEACHER TRAINING SCHEME (GTTS)

This annual scheme is a central part of the Faculty's professional development provision, helping prepare DPhil students for teaching in Higher Education. It is designed not to be a burdensome time commitment (c. 15 hours), and provides all DPhil students with an opportunity for basic training and mentored experience. Upon completion of the scheme, students will be eligible to undertake further undergraduate teaching for the Faculty at normal teaching rates, and can be added to the Faculty's list of approved tutors for college teaching.

Applications are made in Michaelmas Term, and the scheme begins with a training day in Week 0 of Hilary Term. The training day provides the 'Preparation for Teaching and Learning at Oxford' course which University policy requires you to complete before you can begin teaching. Before that date, you must have completed your Transfer of Status.

The scheme provides:

- Preparation for teaching at Oxford (required for any Faculty teaching).
- Techniques for class and tutorial teaching, lecturing, setting and marking essays, and giving constructive feedback.
- Mentored experience of planning and delivering classes or tutorials.

#### **Right to Work checks for students**

Please be aware that the Faculty is required to undertake checks for anyone who will be working for the Faculty before the work takes place. This applies to any teaching, research assistance, or other paid work undertaken by students. If you are asked to undertake any work for which you will be paid by the Faculty, please get in touch with the Head of Administration and Finance by emailing [haf@theology.ox.ac.uk](mailto:haf@theology.ox.ac.uk) at the earliest opportunity.

### 14.3 FACULTY GRADUATE RESEARCH ASSISTANTSHIP SCHEME (GRAS)

This annual scheme offers a number of paid research assistantships to DPhil students, each of whom will be assigned to a lecturer or professor in the Faculty. A Research Assistant (RA) in this scheme is expected to complete up to 30 hours work (paid at or near grade 6.1), equivalent to 3.75 hours/week for the duration of the engagement.

Applications are made in Michaelmas Term, and the scheme usually begins in Hilary Term, at a date arranged by the RA and the participating Faculty member.

The scheme offers:

- The opportunity for graduate students to expand their research experience, to see how senior scholars work and to get a better sense of what an academic career is really like.
- The opportunity to connect with Faculty members beyond their own supervisors if possible, encouraging new mentoring relationships and potential references or collaboration.

Possible RA tasks may include:

- Collecting, organising or analysing source material or data.
- Undertaking literature reviews.
- Assisting with grant applications.
- Creating, revising or updating teaching materials.

### 14.4 ADVANCING TEACHING AND LEARNING (ALT)

The Advancing Teaching and Learning (ALT) programme is a taught programme designed to support those who are relatively new to teaching. DPhil students are eligible to apply, provided you have already completed the 'Preparation for Teaching and Learning at Oxford' course offered as part of the Graduate Teacher Training Scheme.

The programme offers a series of workshops, delivered by the Oxford Centre for Teaching and Learning, designed to supply a more in-depth and systematic pedagogical training. In order to be eligible for the programme, you must have a minimum of 15 contact hours of teaching or learning support over the course of the academic year. Your teaching will be observed by a more experienced colleague who will supply feedback and a record of the observation.

Completion of the programme requires the submission of a written teaching portfolio and a supporting statement from someone at the University who will vouch for the quality of your teaching and learning support practices. On successful completion of the programme, participants are awarded Associate Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (AFHEA) status, a nationally-accredited teaching qualification.

## 14.5 OTHER RESOURCES

- The [Humanities Division Researcher Development Support](#) has a well-established programme of training and support, as well as a dedicated [Humanities Training Officer](#), who is available for advice and support. This link takes you to the page of specific resources and training for [DPhil students](#).
- [Oxford's Careers Service](#) has a sophisticated database of training and employment opportunities, and offers consultations, seminars and advice.
- [Oxford's IT Services](#) have an impressive programme of free and very affordable courses in IT skills, ranging from basic proficiency to work with databases, professional software, and programming languages.
- [Oxford's Language Centre](#) offers university students and staff courses in twelve languages and independent study resources for 140 further languages.
- The [Centre for Teaching and Learning](#) mainly offers career development courses for staff, but also provides some resources for graduate students.

## 14.6 LECTURES AND CLASSES

Termly lecture lists are detailed on [Student Hub](#), usually the week before each full term (week 0). The lists for other Faculties, such as History, Philosophy, or Classics, are available on their respective webpages. The Oxford University Gazette (The University 'newspaper') contains details of special lectures, scholarships, dates of examinations, academic jobs and junior research fellowships at Oxford and Cambridge. The Faculty also has a weekly email which details upcoming seminars, lectures, and conferences.

### Guidance on participation in Faculty classes

The Faculty offers different categories of class or seminar provision for taught postgraduates, and it is important to distinguish between them, as the differences have implications for student access and participation.

- **Research seminars**  
These seminars typically include a presentation from a research student or senior scholar on current research, followed by discussion, are generally open to graduate students in the Faculty of Theology and Religion at every level. It would be advisable to contact the relevant seminar convenor in advance if you intend to join. All Faculty subject or course-based seminars are included in the postgraduate Lecture List, but the Faculty bulletin sometimes contains information about theological seminar series at colleges, which are not publicised through the lecture lists. Please take note of any registration requirements.
- **Core classes for taught programmes**  
These classes are specifically tailored to the needs of Master's or Undergraduate students enrolled on particular programmes. Access to core classes by those who are not enrolled on the relevant programme is not automatic. Class convenors may make a judgment that allowing additional class members to join would not be pedagogically beneficial for those for whom the sessions are designed.

If access is permitted, the following conditions usually pertain:

- The student wishing to attend should contact the class convenor before the classes have started.
  - Class participants should commit themselves to attending each session as far as possible.
  - Class participants should commit to reading the set materials.
- There will be situations in which DPhil students wish to attend classes for particular reasons, for mentoring or professional development. If this is the case, access is still at the discretion of the class convenor, but students should make clear their reasons for wishing to attend, and ask their supervisor to write a note of support.
  - Language or set text classes  
The Faculty offers a number of language classes. These fall into two sub-categories:
    - General language classes: open to all graduate students in the Faculty, and usually include beginners' and intermediate level study.
    - Reading or set text classes: designed for examination preparation for specific programmes, and for those wishing to attend who are not enrolled on those programmes, the same principles apply as for Core classes above.

## **14.7 GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY (GTS)**

The Graduate Theological Society (GTS) is the society for postgraduate students in Oxford 's Faculty of Theology and Religion. The GTS committee aims to strengthen intellectual and social engagement across the Faculty's graduate community and organizes a number of events each year. All postgraduates in the Faculty of Theology and Religion are members of the Graduate Theological Society.

## **14.8 FACULTY LIBRARY AND BOOK FUND**

The Faculty's Librarian is [Dr Hilla Wait](#), and she is based at the Stephen A. Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities, Radcliffe Observatory Quarter, OX2 6GG.

There are over 100 separate libraries within the University, some of which will contain holdings that are of relevance to your studies. Other libraries with particularly interesting holdings are the Leopold Muller Memorial Library (Biblical Studies, Judaism, Islam etc.) in the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, the Sackler Library (Biblical Archaeology, Classics etc.), and the library in Pusey House. For more information on the Bodleian Group of Libraries see [www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk](http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk).

The Faculty has a Graduate Book Fund for the use of our DPhil students. The Faculty Board has monies available annually for this purpose. Under this scheme, you will be able to request the purchase of books or e-books needed for your research which are currently unavailable in Oxford. Requests should be sent to [Dr Hilla Wait](#) or made using the library's [Book Recommendation Form](#). Following purchase, books will be accessioned to the library with you as the first borrower. Books will, at all times, remain the property of the library.

## 14.9 TRAVEL GRANTS

The Faculty encourage graduate students to make visits abroad, familiarise themselves with library resources, make contact with scholars in their field, and attend conferences (particularly if giving a paper). Travel grants are available to Theology and Religion graduate students.

Normally grants may be made up to a maximum of £500 per student in any given academic year. Applications for funds in excess of £500 will only be considered in very exceptional circumstances.

Your college may also be able to help with funding for research travel.

To apply for this funding you should complete the application form, which can be downloaded from the Faculty of Theology and Religion's [Student Hub](#), and submitted to [Graduate Studies](#) by the Monday of -1<sup>st</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> week in any given term, for consideration by the Graduate Studies Committee in 1<sup>st</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> weeks respectively.

Any award granted will be subject to notification of funding received or to be received from other sources (College etc.). Applications will not normally be considered retrospectively, and should be made in advance of the date of travel. Further comprehensive information regarding the terms of the Travel Grant scheme can be found on the application form.

Please note that in the case of a successful application, ***funds will not be released*** by the Faculty unless you can provide proof of valid Travel Insurance. You will also be required to complete a risk assessment form by the Faculty.

Students are also strongly advised to monitor the Foreign & Commonwealth section of the UK Government website for information on their destination in advance of travelling: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>. Details regarding the University's travel insurance policy is available here: [Travel Insurance | Finance Division \(ox.ac.uk\)](#)

## 14.10 LANGUAGE TUITION

The Faculty offers some limited funding to research students for tuition in languages relevant to their studies, if free tuition is not available via the University language centre. To apply for this funding (up to a maximum of £200 per student in any given academic year), you should complete the application form, which can be downloaded from the Faculty of Theology and Religion's [Student Hub](#), and submitted to [Graduate Studies](#) by the Monday of -1<sup>st</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> week in any given term, for consideration by the Graduate Studies Committee in 1<sup>st</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> weeks respectively.

## 14.11 STUDENT REPRESENTATION AND FEEDBACK

Students on full-time and part-time matriculated courses are surveyed once per year on all aspects of their course (learning, living, pastoral support, college) through the Student Barometer. Previous results can be viewed by students, staff and the general public at: [www.ox.ac.uk/students/life/student-engagement](http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/life/student-engagement). The Faculty also conducts a termly survey of

postgraduate students with questions designed to continually improve our postgraduate offerings. The feedback given in surveys is discussed at GSC and GJCC.

[The Graduate Joint Consultative Committee \(GJCC\)](#) consists of elected representatives of the graduate student body (elected each Michaelmas Term), the Faculty Board Chairman and the Director of Graduate Studies. It meets once each term in week 4, and is intended to keep graduate students informed of developments that affect them, as well as to offer an opportunity for addressing their concerns. GJCC members also serve as representatives on key Faculty Board committees. Please check emails, the Student Hub, and Graduate student Facebook group for useful information from the GJCC.

## **14.12 HUMANITIES RESEARCHER DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAMME**

The [Humanities Researcher Development and Training Programme](#) is a comprehensive personal and professional development programme of events, opportunities, workshops and resources to support and develop Humanities researchers at all stages of their career from postgraduate level upwards. Some opportunities are bespoke and developed in-house; others are provided through external partners, student support services or in partnership with faculties. The programme serves all the faculties of the Humanities Division and any researchers working in Humanities-related subject areas.

The aims of the programme are:

- To train our postgraduate students and postdoctoral researchers to become research leaders of the future
- To empower postgraduate students and postdoctoral researchers to become pioneers in a range of careers and professions, within and beyond the sphere of higher education
- To enhance our postgraduate students' and postdoctoral researchers' disruptive voice as active citizens who are confident speaking truth to power, and as ambassadors for the Humanities
- Experiential, hands-on learning is fundamental to our approach, with student-led and early career researcher-led initiatives and projects being generated and supported through a range of funds and initiatives such as the AHRC-TORCH Graduate Fund, Student Peer Review College, and the annual Public Engagement with Research Summer School. All of these mechanisms are in turn run (with support from the Researcher Development and Training Manager) by early career researchers themselves.

The Humanities Researcher Development and Training Programme is open to all postgraduate students (Master's and DPhil) and early career researchers (including college appointments and those on teaching-only contracts) in the Humanities Division. More details may be found on their [webpage](#).

All events and opportunities are free to attend, and a number of workshops, particularly those in the 'Preparation for Academic Practice' pathway, are repeated each term. See the research [webpage](#) for the calendar of upcoming events and for more information about the programme.

### 14.13 SUPPORT FOR RESEARCH STUDENTS FROM THE CAREERS SERVICE

Doing a research degree opens up a range of career options, yet it is up to you to seize the opportunities to exploit these and get ready for the next step. Our best advice is to start early, because you will get busier as your research progresses. No need to decide at this point whether you will stay in academia or move on to new pastures: many of the career-building steps that you can take now will benefit your CV and your wider employment options whichever step you take next.

[Oxford's Careers Service](#) works alongside the Humanities divisional training team to offer information resources, one-to-one support and a programme of bespoke workshops focusing on key career skills and tools for career planning and development. We support DPhil students and research staff from every department across the university, regardless of their chosen career paths.

A termly programme of workshops caters specifically for researchers and focus on career design and development, networking, CV writing, job applications and interviews, and more. See our programme and book places via the CareerConnect calendar. All DPhil students are automatically issued a CareerConnect account.

We also offer an Insight into Academia programme, which gives insider perspectives on becoming an academic and the steps required to keep you there, along with tips to maximise your chances of application success.

If you're looking to boost your skill set, consider taking part in the Researcher Strategy Consultancy, which provides early career researchers with an opportunity to develop the core employability skills required for independent consulting in any field or a transition into analytical, business or policy roles in the public and private sector.

[Research students](#) are also eligible for the fantastic opportunities to explore different work sectors and roles offered through our summer internships and micro-internships programmes; see the Internships Office pages for more information on these.

Unsure where to begin or how to use your time here most effectively? A one-to-one conversation with a Careers Adviser may help! Come and discuss your personal career plans, aspirations and worries in a confidential setting: appointments can be made via CareerConnect

## 15. GRADUATION AND LEAVING OXFORD

### 15.1 LEAVE TO SUPPLICATE

Leave to Supplicate (LTS) is granted once Faculty Board approves the recommendation from your examiners that your degree be awarded. This means you have essentially passed your DPhil and may have your degree conferred upon you. Research Degrees will send you a letter confirming you have been granted LTS and instructions on what to do next.

The title of doctor should only be used once your degree has been conferred at a degree ceremony. Students who have completed their viva or submitted corrections should not use the title until such time as the DPhil degree has been conferred, at which point it is officially recognised by the University.

### 15.2 GRADUATION

Please see [here](#) to find out what you need to do in order to graduate and the benefits of joining the University of Oxford's growing body of alumni. There is also useful information on ordering certificates as well as opportunities to continue your studies.

### 15.3 WORKING IN THE UK AFTER YOUR STUDIES – THE GRADUATE ROUTE VISA

The Graduate Route visa is an opportunity to apply for a visa to remain in the UK to work or look for work for two years if you have completed an undergraduate degree, PGCE or masters degree, or three years if you have completed a DPhil. On 12 May 2025 the government published its [Immigration White Paper](#) in which it states it will reduce the period for the Graduate route to 18 months. We do not yet know when this will be implemented or if this reduced period will also apply to DPhil students.

Please refer to the [University's information on the Graduate Route Visa](#) for FAQs and instructions about how to apply. If you have any questions please contact the [Student Immigration team](#). You will need to have successfully completed your qualification before you apply i.e. received your official results/leave to supplicate. The Home Office also requires the University to report online when all visa holders have successfully completed their studies, in case you wish to apply for this visa, and the Student Immigration team will run a report every Friday throughout the year for this purpose. You will receive an email on the Friday of the week you have received your results/leave to supplicate, to confirm this has been reported to the Home Office. You should wait until you have received this email confirmation before you apply for the Graduate Route. Remember that you can only apply from within the UK and you need to still have a valid Tier 4 or Student visa.

## 16. SUPPORTING YOUR STUDIES

### 16.1 PASTORAL AND WELFARE SUPPORT

Students often face personal problems, which will almost inevitably affect their academic work. If this is the case for you, you are not alone. It is entirely normal to have issues in your life that impact to a greater or lesser degree on your work. Your first recourse should ordinarily be to your **supervisor(s)**, but in addition to them, a number of people are available, not necessarily to solve your problem, but to listen to you and advise you on where to turn to for appropriate help.

For welfare issues, in addition to talking to your supervisor, you should first contact your **College welfare team**, and if appropriate your **College nurse, doctor**, or other medical professionals, and/or the central **University's Student welfare and support services** (see [Welfare and Wellbeing](#)). You can also contact the [Director of Graduate Studies](#), and the [Graduate Studies](#) team.

Financial difficulty can often be discussed, in confidence, with your **College's senior member** responsible for graduates (**Tutor for Graduates, Senior Tutor, or Dean for Graduates**) and/or a **College welfare officer** or **financial officer**. Every college has its own systems of support for students: please refer to your college handbook or website for more information on whom to contact and what support is available.

For academic difficulties, whether or not connected to other problems, you should speak to your faculty-appointed **supervisor**, and if this is not possible or desirable, your **College advisor** or your **Subject Coordinator**.

Every college has their own systems of support for students, please refer to your College handbook or website for more information on who to contact and what support is available through your college. Please let your supervisor know if you are unwell.

Your College **graduate common room** (GCR, MCR or JCR in graduate colleges) will provide both social and welfare support (often including **peer supporters**) as well as intellectual community. Within the Faculty, the officers of the Faculty's Graduate Joint Consultative Committee (GJCC) and of the Graduate Theological Society (GTS) can also provide support through the organisation of academic and social events which bring you together with fellow students.

A range of other services led by students are available to help provide support, including the peer supporter network, the Oxford SU's Student Advice Service and Nightline. For more information visit [www.ox.ac.uk/students/shw/peer](http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/shw/peer). Oxford SU also runs a series of campaigns to raise awareness and promote causes that matter to students. For full details, visit <https://www.oxfordsu.org/communities/campaigns/>.

The [Disability Advisory Service](#) provides specialist advice for students with mental health disabilities, and for students with other visible and/or invisible disabilities, including sensory or mobility impairment, long-term illness or physical health condition, specific learning difficulties (SpLD) such as dyslexia, dyspraxia or ADHD, or social or communication difficulties such as autism spectrum condition.

The [University Counselling Service](#) assists students who are experiencing psychological stress. Appointments can be made either by calling (2)70300 or by calling in person at their offices (3 Worcester Street); you do not need a referral from your GP or anybody else. The office of the Service is open Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm throughout the year, except for short periods in the vacations which are publicised on their website well in advance.

Oxford Nightline ([Oxford Nightline - Oxford Nightline](#)) is a confidential listening and information service run for students by students. Students can phone free on internal phones, or visit their office at 16 Wellington Square. Nightline can also be contacted by the University's messenger postal service. Telephone: +44 (0)1865 (2)70270.

The University also has a specialist [Sexual Harassment and Violence Support Service](#) whose caseworkers provide free, confidential support and advice to any current student who has been impacted by sexual harassment or violence. See also the University's guidance for [Supporting Students at Oxford: Preventing and Responding to Harassment and Sexual Misconduct](#).

Details of the wide range of sources of support available more widely in the University are available from the [Oxford Students website](#), including in relation to mental and physical health and disability. More detail can be also be found in the University's [Common Approach to Support Student Mental Health](#).

## 16.2 FINANCIAL SUPPORT

You are expected to have arranged financial support for the course before you arrive in Oxford. The University attaches great importance to the student having sorted this out well in advance, since financial difficulties can become a chronic problem for graduates, and the University has only very limited resources to offer in remedy.

The University considers applications from students with financial difficulties during the course of their studies. Applications are generally submitted through the college. Details of financial assistance from the central University can be found here: <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/fees-funding/assistance/oxford>.

Most colleges have general funds available for special purposes (e.g. travel, conferences) for which their own members may apply. Some will contribute to the cost of producing a thesis. Some will help fund a final, otherwise unfunded year of a research degree. Some colleges offer Senior Scholarships or Junior Research Fellowships, for which applicants in theology may compete alongside other applicants. A few offer scholarships especially for theology. Details of general funding opportunities can be found on the Faculty's website: <https://www.theology.ox.ac.uk/funding>.

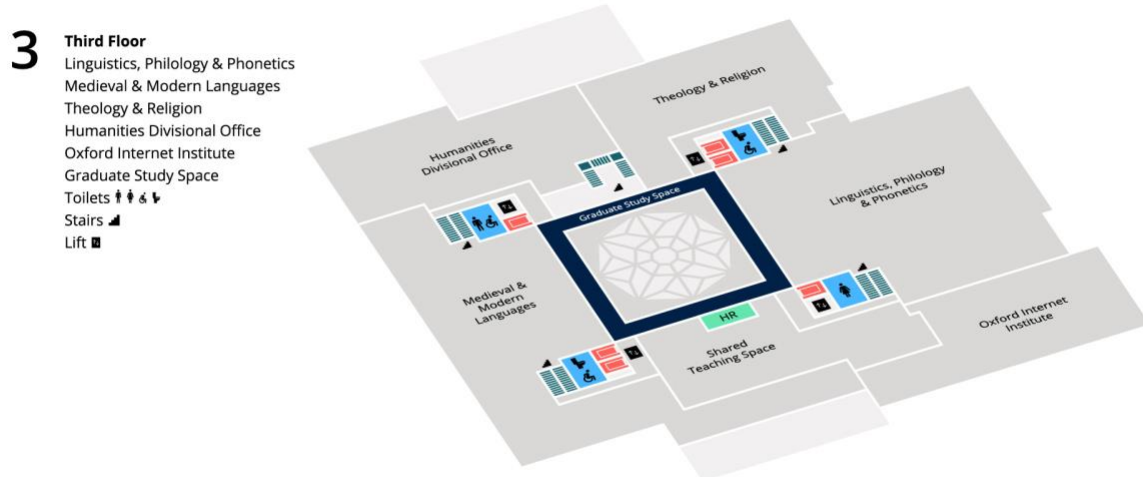
## 16.3 WRITING SUPPORT

Support for Thesis and Thesis writing skills may be found within the University's [Study Skills and Training](#) pages.

## 16.4 GRADUATE STUDENT FACILITIES

The Faculty of Theology and Religion is based in the [Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities](#). Graduate students have access to a number of study areas within the Centre, including open public spaces equipped with desks.

In addition, dedicated graduate study desks are available to book through the Faculty. You can reserve one using the following link: [Graduate Study Desks](#)



## 16.5 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY AT OXFORD

The University of Oxford Equality Policy states that...“The University of Oxford is committed to fostering an inclusive culture which promotes equality, values diversity and maintains a working, learning and social environment in which the rights and dignity of all its staff and students are respected. We recognise that the broad range of experiences that a diverse staff and student body brings strengthens our research and enhances our teaching, and that in order for Oxford to remain a world-leading institution we must continue to provide a diverse, inclusive, fair and open environment that allows everyone to grow and flourish.”

As a member of the University you contribute towards making it an inclusive environment and we ask that you treat other members of the University community with respect, courtesy and consideration. Visit our [website](#) for further details or contact us directly for advice: [equality@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:equality@admin.ox.ac.uk).

The [Equality and Diversity Unit](#) works with all parts of the collegiate University to develop and promote an understanding of equality and diversity and ensure that this is reflected in all its processes. The Unit also supports the University in meeting the legal requirements of the Equality Act 2010, including eliminating unlawful discrimination, promoting equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between people with and without the ‘protected characteristics’ of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and/or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The Equality and Diversity Unit also supports a broad network of harassment advisors in departments/faculties and colleges as part of the Harassment Advisory Service. For more information on the University's Harassment and Bullying policy and the support available for students visit: [Harassment Advisory Service](#).

There are also a range of faith societies, belief groups, and religious centres within Oxford University that are open to students. For more information visit the EDU's [religion and belief](#) page.

## **17. COMPLAINTS AND ACADEMIC APPEALS**

### **17.1 COMPLAINTS**

The University, the Humanities Division and the Faculty of Theology and Religion all hope that provision made for students at all stages of their course of study will result in no need for complaints (about that provision) or appeals (against the outcomes of any form of assessment).

Where such a need arises, an informal discussion with the person immediately responsible for the issue that you wish to complain about (and who may not be one of the individuals identified below) is often the simplest way to achieve a satisfactory resolution.

Many sources of advice are available from colleges, faculties/departments and bodies like the Counselling Service or the OUSU Student Advice Service, which have extensive experience in advising students. You may wish to take advice from one of those sources before pursuing your complaint.

General areas of concern about provision affecting students as a whole should be raised through Joint Consultative Committees or via student representation on the Faculty's committees.

If your concern or complaint relates to teaching or other provision made by the Faculty, then you should raise it with the Director of Graduate Studies. Complaints about departmental facilities should be made to the Head of Administration and Finance. If you feel unable to approach one of those individuals, you may contact the Faculty Board Chairman (currently, Professor Mark Edwards (2025-2026)). The officer concerned will attempt to resolve your concern/complaint informally.

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome, you may take your concern further by making a formal complaint to the Proctors under the University Student Complaints Procedure (<https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/complaints>).

If your concern or complaint relates to teaching or other provision made by your college, you should raise it either with your tutor or with one of the college officers, Senior Tutor, Tutor for Graduates (as appropriate). Your college will also be able to explain how to take your complaint further if you are dissatisfied with the outcome of its consideration.

## 17.2 ACADEMIC APPEALS

An academic appeal is an appeal against the decision of an academic body (e.g. boards of examiners, transfer and confirmation decisions etc.), on grounds such as procedural error or evidence of bias. There is no right of appeal against academic judgement. **Academic appeals** concern the outcome of examinations and follow a different process from **complaints** about teaching and supervision.

You should discuss your concern in the first instance with your supervisor and College advisor/ Tutor for Graduates. If you want to lodge an appeal, this has to be brought **via your College** to the Proctors' Office, not via the Faculty. This is primarily because Oxford separates teaching and examination. **Please note that on no account should you raise your concerns directly with those who have examined your work.**

If you still have concerns you can make a formal appeal to the Proctors who will consider appeals under the [University Academic Appeals Procedure](#).

As noted above, the procedures adopted by the Proctors in relation to complaints and appeals are described on: the [Proctors' webpage](#) and the relevant [Council regulations](#).

Please remember in connection with all the academic appeals that:

- The Proctors are not empowered to challenge the academic judgement of examiners or academic bodies.
- The Proctors can consider whether the procedures for reaching an academic decision were properly followed; i.e. whether there was a significant procedural administrative error; whether there is evidence of bias or inadequate assessment; whether the examiners failed to take into account special factors affecting a candidate's performance.
- On no account should you contact your examiners or assessors directly.

The Proctors will indicate what further action you can take if you are dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint or appeal considered by them.

Please note that there is an important difference between making a **formal complaint** (about your experience as a student, treatment by others, etc.) and lodging an **academic appeal**.

## 17.3 HARASSMENT

As noted above, colleges and faculties have appointed Harassment Advisers within a network of such advisers organised centrally. The University's [Harassment Advisory Service](#) is available on the EDU website.

## 17.4 OTHER UNIVERSITY POLICIES and GUIDANCE

[University's Health and Safety Policy](#)

[Safety and Supervisor Responsibilities](#)

[Fieldwork](#)

Additional guidance for fieldwork and travel may be found on the [Faculty's Student Hub](#))

## APPENDIX A: Indicative Criteria for Examination Outcomes – DPhil

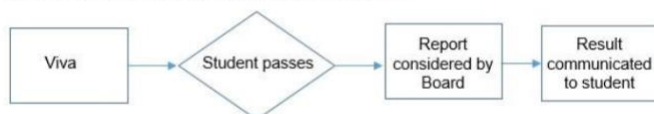
(extracts from [Policy and Guidance, Appendix 1](#)):

| Outcome                                                                        | Supporting criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Deadline                                                                                                                                                     | Communication                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A. Award DPhil (without corrections)                                           | Examiners satisfied student fulfils all outlined criteria, and thesis merits the award. Examiners can confirm in their report that student has: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good general knowledge of thesis subject</li> <li>• Made significant contribution to that particular field of learning</li> <li>• Presented in a coherent and scholarly manner</li> <li>• Provided a satisfactory abstract</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | N/A                                                                                                                                                          | Examiners must report their recommendation to the board for ratification.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| B. Award DPhil (with minor corrections)                                        | Examiners satisfied thesis is of sufficient merit, however minor corrections are needed before thesis deposited. Examiners must be satisfied with corrections made before they submit their report.<br>Changes required: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited formatting, typographical, stylistic, or grammatical errors, layout changes</li> <li>• Limited corrections to references</li> <li>• Limited alterations to arguments or logic for the purposes of clarity (where further research by student is not required)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                              | A period of two months (from date student notified of outcome of their examination) is available for the student to resubmit with the necessary corrections. | Examiners should provide list of minor corrections to student within two weeks of viva.<br>Examiners must ensure student corrects thesis to their satisfaction before they submit their report.<br>Examiners should agree between themselves which of them will consider & sign-off corrected thesis.                                                                                                                                                           |
| C. Potentially award DPhil (resubmit after major corrections)                  | Examiners satisfied thesis has sufficient potential merit, however major corrections needed, which do not affect originality of thesis or require further research.<br>Changes required: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant formatting, typographical, stylistic, or grammatical errors, layout changes</li> <li>• Widespread corrections to references</li> <li>• Significant alterations to arguments or logic for clarity</li> <li>• Limited further analysis to help with articulation of arguments</li> <li>• Other extensive corrections (see relevant divisional guidance)</li> </ul> Student to provide the corrected thesis with a summary list of responses to the examiners' points.                                               | A period of six months (from date student notified of outcome of their examination) is available for student to provide corrected thesis.                    | Examiners must report preliminary recommendation to board with description of major corrections needed.<br>Board must consider the examiners' recommendation & confirm the outcome. When student has submitted revised thesis both examiners must be satisfied with the student's corrections before they make recommendation to the board.<br>If examiners' recommendation is not to award following consideration of corrected thesis, a viva should be held. |
| D. Potentially award DPhil (resubmit after major corrections & mandatory viva) | Examiners satisfied thesis has sufficient potential merit, however major corrections needed, which do not affect the originality of thesis or require further research. Re-examination also needed.<br>Changes required: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further analysis in some aspects of thesis which requires limited additional research</li> <li>• When failure to articulate arguments fully in thesis &amp; it is not demonstrated in examination that research/analysis has been fully undertaken</li> <li>• Widespread typographical, stylistic or grammatical errors, which may affect comprehension</li> <li>• Formatting errors, and/or presentational or layout changes, which alter meaning of data, or arguments presented</li> </ul> | A period of six months (from date student notified of outcome of their examination) is available for the student to provide the corrected thesis.            | Examiners must report this preliminary recommendation to the board with a description of major corrections needed.<br>Board must confirm its recommendation.<br>Both examiners must be satisfied with the student's corrections before recommendations of award are made to the board.<br>If the outcome is 'not award', or 'award with minor corrections', then outcomes E-G should be recommended.                                                            |

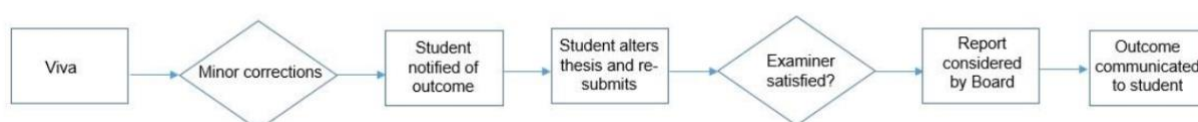
|                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Other extensive corrections, which require limited reworking or reinterpretation of the intellectual content of thesis</li> </ul> <p>Student to provide the corrected thesis with summary list of responses to the examiners' points.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| E. Student choice: reference back & re-examine for DPhil or supplicate for MLitt/MSc(Res) | <p>Student choice.</p> <p>Referencing back for re-examination for DPhil - changes required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Additional research and analysis needed, but still potential to meet DPhil standard</li> <li>Arguments not articulated adequately, and examination did not demonstrate sufficient research/analysis has been done</li> <li>Widespread typographical, stylistic, or grammatical errors, preventing comprehension</li> <li>In the meaning of data or arguments presented</li> <li>Substantial presentational errors, needing extensive work (needed for comprehension)</li> </ul> <p>If student choice is to revise the thesis for DPhil, a separate, concise report of specific changes made should be presented along with the resubmitted thesis. (MSD, Humanities, OUDCE - word limit 1,000, MPLS - word limit 2,000).</p> <p>MLitt/MSc(Res), if student chooses this route, and thesis has reached standard required, examiners should state which should be offered to student.</p> <p>If the student's thesis does not meet standard &amp; needs further work (more than minor corrections) to reach MLitt/MSc(Res), outcome F or G should be selected.</p> | <p>If student choice is to revise thesis for DPhil, then it must be resubmitted no later than 12 months after the board's agreement of the student's choice. The student can then apply again for appointment of examiners.</p> <p>If student choice is MLitt/MSc(Res) &amp; examiners state minor corrections necessary, a period of two months will be available for the student to make corrections &amp; resubmit thesis.</p> | <p>Examiners must report recommendation to the board.</p> <p>Board confirms its recommendation and notifies the student.</p> <p>Student then notifies the department of their 'choice' via the Graduate Studies Assistant.</p> <p>Student then either resubmits or attends graduation.</p> |
| J No award (fail)                                                                         | <p>Examiners think it is unlikely the student will reach the standard required for MLitt/MSc(Res) within the time allowed.</p> <p>Examiners must include their reasons for this option in their report &amp; this may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fundamental flaws in collection of data, &amp;/or analysis, &amp;/or the standard of argument used within the thesis.</li> <li>Student has not acknowledged these flaws or been able to set out how they would rectify these issues during examination</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <p>The board must confirm the examiners' decision.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

## Appendix B: Flowcharts to support Examination Outcomes for the DPhil Examination (extracts from [Policy and Guidance](#), Appendix 2).

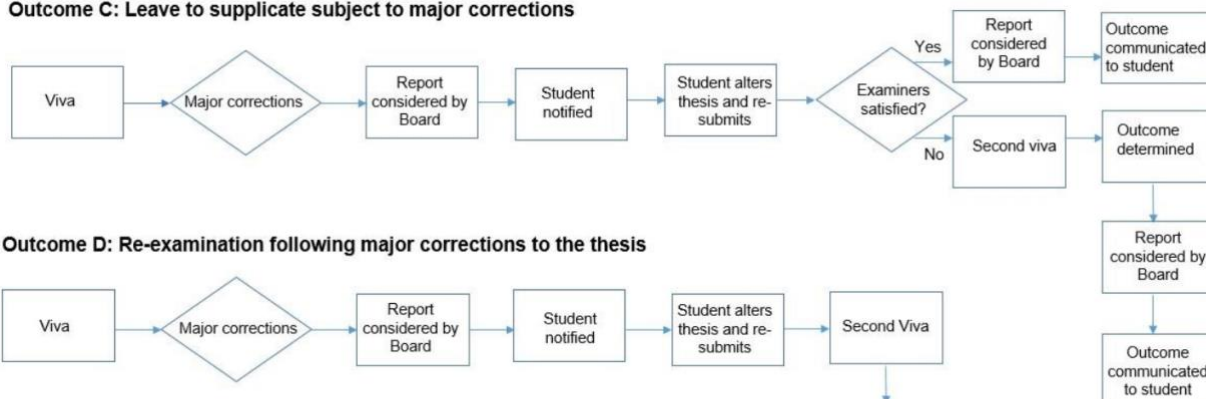
### Outcome A: Leave to supplicate for DPhil



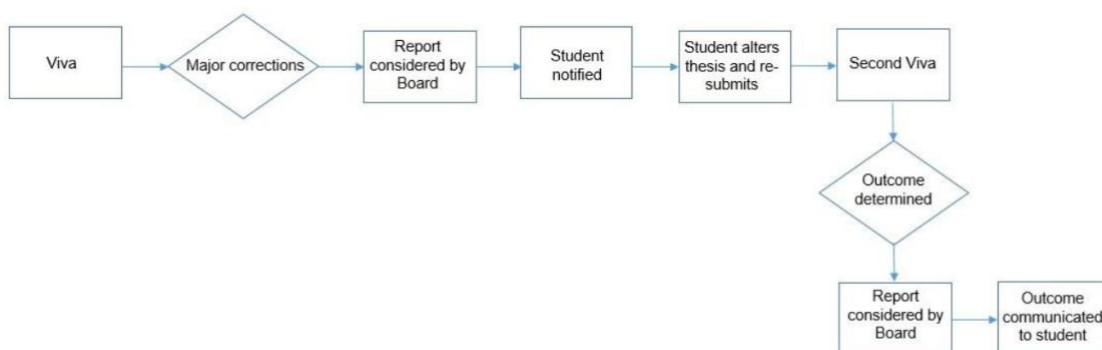
### Outcome B: Leave to supplicate subject to minor corrections



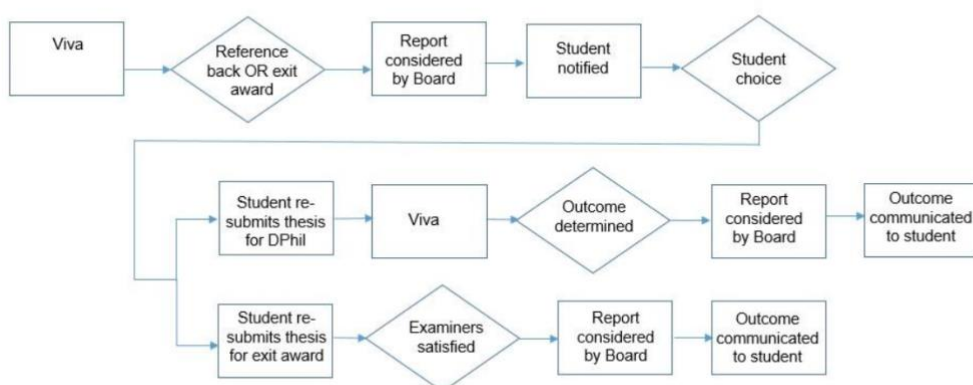
### Outcome C: Leave to supplicate subject to major corrections



### Outcome D: Re-examination following major corrections to the thesis



### Outcome E: Reference back of the thesis OR leave to supplicate for Master of Letters or Master of Science by Research following minor corrections





## Understanding harassment and sexual misconduct: What you need to know

**The University of Oxford is committed to fostering a safe environment where all students can thrive. Harassment and sexual misconduct are not tolerated here.**

For full information on the University's policies, procedures, and support services related to harassment and sexual misconduct, please see [Supporting Students at Oxford: Preventing Harassment and Sexual Misconduct](#).

This guide explains:

- what harassment and sexual misconduct mean in the context of complaints against students;
- how they're defined under the University policy;
- what your options are if you're affected; and
- where to go for support.

It also includes a summary of key University policies and reporting procedures. Promoting understanding of these issues and what you can do if you are affected is an essential step to fostering a safe community at Oxford.

Oxford is a collegiate University, which means students may be members of both the University and a college (or Permanent Private Hall). While this guide outlines University-wide policies and procedures, colleges will have their own policies and sources of support. You are encouraged to consult your college (if applicable) for further guidance and to familiarise yourself with college specific approaches to harassment and sexual misconduct.

### What we mean by harassment and sexual misconduct:

The following guidance relates to complaints of harassment against students, where "harassment" is defined by reference to both: the definition in the Equality Act 2010 and the Protection from Harassment Act 1997.

#### Harassment

For full definitions and guidance view the [Student Disciplinary Procedure \(Non-Academic Cases\)](#).

Under the [Equality Act 2010](#) harassment is:

- Unwanted conduct of a sexual nature or relating to a protected characteristic (listed below) which has the purpose or effect of
  - Violating someone's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person.

**OR**

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- Less favourable treatment as a result of the person either rejecting or submitting to harassing behaviour that is related to gender reassignment sex or of a sexual nature.

Where the conduct is of a sexual nature this is described as “sexual harassment”.

For the purposes of investigating a formal report or in deciding whether the conduct has the effect of violating someone’s dignity or creating an intimidating hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment, each of the following are taken into account: the perception of the person who is subject to the conduct, the other circumstances of the case and whether it is reasonable for the conduct to have that effect.<sup>1</sup>

Protected characteristics include:

Age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

Under the [Protection from Harassment Act 1997](#), repeated unwanted behaviour towards another person (or people), including causing them distress or fear may also be considered harassment, even if not related to a protected characteristic.

Harassment can take the form of individual behaviour, including:

- Face to face, either verbally or physically
- Through other forms of communication, including but not limited to written communications and communications via any form of electronic media or mobile communication device.
- Directly to the person concerned, or to a third party.

Examples of behaviour which may amount to harassment relating to a protected characteristic:

- Jokes, gestures or derogatory comments, for example, about a student’s disability.
- Verbal and physical threats, intimidating, disparaging or insulting behaviour linked, for example, to gender reassignment, sex or sexual orientation.
- Assaulting someone, for example, targeting someone with violence because of their race, religion or gender reassignment.
- Posting offensive comments on electronic media, including using mobile devices, for example, sending memes that mock another student’s religion directly to that student.
- Isolating someone from University-organised academic activities, for example, excluding another student from group work due to perceived religious, cultural, or gender differences.

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<sup>1</sup> You do not need to make or be involved in a formal report, or meet any thresholds, or definitions to access support. Even if you’re not sure what happened, you can arrange a meeting with a service (listed in [link to SCS]) to receive some practical and emotional support.

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## Examples of behaviour which may amount to sexual harassment:

- Invading someone's space, for example, by standing unnecessarily close to them.
- Inappropriate body language, for example, looking or staring at them in a way that feels uncomfortable or intimidating.
- Sending unwanted sexual messages that are humiliating, insulting, abusive and/or intimidating.
- Publishing, circulating or displaying pornographic or sexual images, or other sexual content.
- Making sexually explicit comments or innuendos, for example, about someone's body or appearance.
- Unwanted sexual advances and physical contact, for example, placing a hand on someone's thigh, lower back, or shoulder.

Harassment can also include being treated less favourably as a result of rejecting or submitting to harassing behaviour in relation to gender reassignment, sex or of a sexual nature.

## Examples of behaviour which may amount to harassment in this context:

- Being excluded, criticised or ignored in group work as a result of rejecting or submitting to unwanted sexual advances.

## Examples of behaviour which may amount to harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act

- Sending a threatening message to more than one person.
- Repeatedly sending someone threats of violence or harm.
- Repeatedly shouting at, insulting, disparaging or intimidating a person.
- Repeatedly sending graphic content, for example, sending violent or hateful images, to someone.

Stalking is a form of harassment and may be characterised by any of the following repeated and unwanted behaviours that cause distress or fear in a person:

- Following or watching someone, in person or online.
- Making calls, or sending messages or emails.
- Loitering in any place, for example, waiting outside someone's residence, classroom or study area without a legitimate reason, in order to watch or approach them.
- Publishing statements or sharing personal details without consent.
- Watching or spying on a person including through the use of CCTV or electronic surveillance.
- Interfering with someone's property, for example, repeatedly tampering with or hiding their belongings.

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## Sexual Misconduct and Consent

Sexual misconduct is defined as any unwanted conduct of a sexual nature. For a full definition of sexual misconduct and what constitutes consent, plus guidance, view the [Student Disciplinary Procedure \(Non-Academic Cases\)](#).

Sexual misconduct occurs where:

- Consent was not given, and
- The person accused of sexual misconduct did not reasonably believe that consent had been given.

What is consent?

Consent is the agreement to engage in an activity, by choice, and with the freedom and capacity to make that choice.

A person cannot consent if:

- They are incapacitated, and unable to make a decision and communicate that decision. This may be due to, for example, the influence of drink, drugs, age or disability.
- They are not in a position to make a choice freely and without constraint in all the circumstances (e.g., because of threat or coercion).
- They are incapacitated or unable to make a choice freely because they have been given a substance without their knowledge or agreement.
- They are asleep or otherwise unconscious.

## If you have a concern and need support

The University recognises that experiencing or witnessing harassment or sexual misconduct can have a significant impact. Support is available to anyone affected - whether you have experienced something directly, witnessed an incident, been named in a report, or are seeking help for related reasons.

You don't need to make or be involved in a formal report, or meet any thresholds, or definitions to access support. Even if you're not sure what happened, you can arrange a meeting with a service to receive some practical and emotional support.

A full list of support services is available in [Supporting Students at Oxford: Preventing Harassment and Sexual Misconduct](#).

University support services (all free to access):

- [Sexual Harassment and Violence Support Service](#) – independent, confidential specialist support if you have experienced sexual harassment or violence, domestic/relationship abuse or stalking.

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- [Independent Sexual Violence Advisor \(ISVA\)](#) – Independent of the University, including colleges/departments, offering advocacy and guidance if you're reporting sexual violence to the University, college or police.
- [Reported Student Service](#) – Confidential support if you have been informally accused of sexual misconduct or named in a formal report.
- [Harassment Advisor Network](#) – Trained advisors across the University offering confidential advice and guidance to anyone affected by harassment, including if you have been accused of harassment.

## Additional support

- [Oxford SU Student Advice Service](#) – Independent, confidential advice on accessing support, navigating processes, or responding to incidents of harassment and sexual misconduct.

## College support

- [College welfare teams](#) – Colleges offer their own support, which may include welfare officers, peer supporters, Chaplains (for all faiths and none) and nurses. These teams can offer confidential support and help with access to further support if needed. Options for addressing a concern:
- 

If you've been affected by harassment or sexual misconduct you have both informal and formal options. There is no single right way to respond, you can choose what feels right for you.

## Informal resolution

In some cases, informal resolution may be appropriate. This could include a structured conversation, clarification of expectations, or other practical steps. It can be facilitated by a Head of Department, Director of Graduate Studies, or Senior Tutor.

Director of Graduate Studies email: [dgs@theology.ox.ac.uk](mailto:dgs@theology.ox.ac.uk)

## Formal reporting

Formal reports can be made to the University or your college, depending on the situation.

- Reports involving students from another college:  
Formal reports are submitted to the Proctors' Office under the University's [Student Disciplinary Procedure \(Non-Academic Misconduct\)](#).  
You can submit a report by email or request a meeting with the Proctors' Office ([casework@proctors.ox.ac.uk](mailto:casework@proctors.ox.ac.uk)) first, to ask questions or talk through your options.
- Reports involving University staff:  
Reports are submitted to the relevant Head of Department and considered under the University's [Procedure for Complaints of Harassment Against University Staff](#).

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You can choose to email a written report or meet with the Head of Department beforehand to discuss your concerns and get advice on next steps.

- College-specific procedure for reports involving members of the same college:  
Please note that colleges have their own procedures for reporting concerns about students and college staff and responding to harassment and sexual misconduct. If applicable, you are encouraged to consult your college for further guidance and support related to college-specific matters.

In general: Colleges usually handle reports when both individuals are from the same college. The University usually takes the lead when individuals are from different colleges.

For full reporting guidance, consult [Supporting Students at Oxford: Preventing Harassment and Sexual Misconduct](#).

## Policies and procedures to know about

The University has a number of policies that outline expectations for behaviour and how concerns are addressed, including the:

- [Harassment Policy](#)
- [Statute XI: Code of Discipline](#)
- [Student Disciplinary Procedure \(Non-Academic Misconduct\)](#)
- [Procedure for Complaints of Harassment Against University Staff](#)
- [Policy Concerning Relationships Between Staff and Students](#)
- [Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech](#).

You can find and read all relevant policies in [Supporting Students at Oxford: Preventing Harassment and Sexual Misconduct](#).