Graduate Studies Handbook

2025-26

Notes of Guidance for the Programme *Master of Science by Coursework in Social Data Science* for Students and Supervisors at the Oxford Internet Institute

Version 1.0, 01 October 2025

Issued by the Graduate Studies Committee

Oxford Internet Institute, University of Oxford

The Stephen A. Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities
Oxford Radcliffe Observatory Quarter
Woodstock Road
Oxford
OX1 6GG

Version history

1.0	01 October 2025	First published

Contents

1 Introduction

Welcome to Oxford and the Oxford Internet Institute. We hope that you will enjoy your time living and studying in Oxford and will find it a rewarding experience.

As the Director of Graduate Studies for the Oxford Internet Institute, I would like to extend a warm welcome to the OII community. You join a growing group of current and former OII students who have studied for degrees here on our MSc and DPhil programmes, but also students who have taken part in shorter engagements such as our annual student conference, our annual Summer Doctoral Programme, and of course the many public events we hold at the OII. All the faculty and staff here at OII want to make your time here productive and rewarding, and we look forward to the opportunities we will have to get to know you and to learn from you and your diverse experiences as we teach and supervise you in your work. As you will soon discover, the OII is a department with multidisciplinarity at its core, which is reflected both in the wide range of academic backgrounds of the faculty but also in the diversity of students who come here to better understand life online. Welcome!

Professor Bernie Hogan, Director of Graduate Studies, OII

1.1 Scope and purpose of this handbook

This handbook applies to students starting the MSc in Social Data Science programme in 2025-26. The information in this handbook may be different for students starting in other years. It is hoped that you will find the information contained within the handbook to be a useful guide both while you are new to studying your course and throughout the duration of your studies. The handbook is also a source of reference for academic staff appointed as your supervisors and anyone else involved in teaching you, including in classes, seminars and lectures.

The information given here is an informal description and interpretation of some of the most relevant rules in *Examination Regulations*. Any formal question has to be settled by reference to the Regulations and not to this handbook.

To be kept up to date, a copy of this handbook is available on Canvas. Comments and criticisms of this handbook are welcome and should be sent to the OII's MSc Programmes Co-ordinator at msc@oii.ox.ac.uk. Students should refer to the Graduate Studies Handbook on Canvas as corrections may be made and this will be the most up-to-date version.

1.1.1 Disclaimer

The Examination Regulations relating to this course are available at 2025/26 version.

These are the definitive University regulations that govern examination of the degree. If there is a conflict between information in this handbook and the Examination Regulations, then you should follow the Examination Regulations. If you have any concerns, please contact the MSc Coordinator at msc@oii.ox.ac.uk.

The information in this handbook is accurate as of 01 October 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 department will publish a new version of this handbook together with a list of the changes and students will be informed.

1.1.2 Academic progress - who to contact

Your supervisor is your main point of contact for academic progress and will serve as liaison between you and other faculty members.

The Course Director for the MSc in Social Data Science, currently Dr Mohsen Mosleh, has immediate responsibility for students on this course. The MSc Coordinator, David Pepper, is responsible for course administration, on-course student support and welfare matters and is the person you should contact in the first instance with any queries.

Students who wish to discuss any academic issues that they prefer not to discuss with the Course Director, or their supervisor can also speak to the Director of Graduate Studies, currently Prof Bernie Hogan. He can be contacted at dgs@oii.ox.ac.uk.

1.1.3   Laptop specification for students

All software taught on courses is either freely available open-source software, University site licenced software (available for download via https://register.it.ox.ac.uk) or available on the departmental servers. Students will be given instructions on how to access this software as part of the IT induction during Induction Week.

 Students should also install the software on their own personal laptops, which will require that the laptop meet some minimum specifications. Most modern laptops should work with the software used on the course, but as a guideline, you should have a laptop capable of running Windows 10/11 and/or currently supported versions of OSX/Linux distros.

Generally, most software taught on the course is available on Windows, Mac, or Linux operating systems. Chromebooks, netbooks, or tablets are not suitable for the course. Please note that some packages might be Linux only; however, students will have access to this software via the departmental servers.

1.2   Induction

1.2.1   Induction programme

A general compulsory induction programme for all newly admitted graduates at the OII will be held at the beginning of the academic year in the week preceding the start of Michaelmas Term (0th week). During that week they will be introduced to the OII's Director, Director of Graduate Studies, MSc Programme Directors, and the Graduate Studies Support Team. This general introductory meeting will be followed by induction sessions introducing the new graduate students to OII premises, IT resources and departmental policies. These general meetings will be followed by separate meetings dealing with induction matters for the DPhil and MSc courses. In addition, students will be formally introduced to faculty members and key members of the administration team.

All new students will be e-mailed the induction timetable, reading lists and Graduate Studies Handbook before the induction meetings.

As soon as you arrive in Oxford you should obtain your **University Card** from your college. This is essential for access to the University's email and computing systems and for registration as a reader at the Bodleian Libraries (see section 9.3). It is also used to access the OII's premises at Schwarzman Centre.

1.2.2   Key sources of information

There are several key sources of information for OII MSc students.

- The OII's **website**. There you will find lists of faculty and their research interests, which can help identify those working in fields similar to your own and a regularly updated events section, with information on OII activities.
- **Canvas:** The most up to date reading lists and course information are held on Oxford's Virtual Learning Environment, Canvas.
- The **OII Intranet site** for staff and students contains useful information on facilities, departmental governance and other matters.
- The **University's web pages** contain extensive information on numerous key aspects of graduate work. We note particularly useful ones below.
  - International Students
  - Student Health and Welfare
  - Examination Regulations
  - Policy on Postgraduate Taught Degrees
  - Dates of Term
- The **University Gazette**, published at least weekly in term time, contains a wide range of other university announcements, including forthcoming seminars and lectures. It can be read online, consulted in most libraries including the OII Library, and is distributed to all colleges.
- **College Handbooks**: Please refer to your own College's website

- Additionally, please check your **Oxford email** regularly as it will be used to send you important information about your course.

2 MSc Programme

2.1 Aims of the programme

2.1.1 Educational aims of the programme

The MSc programme is designed for students with core quantitative skills who wish to challenge themselves to understand and overcome the mathematical and computational challenges of analysing structured and unstructured data using machine learning and other techniques. We aim for the programme to contribute to the education of current and future researchers, analysts and practitioners from both public and private sectors, providing them with the toolkit (concepts, theories, methods and principles) to carry out innovative, high-quality research, develop new methodological approaches, and to build and deploy new systems involving computational and human interaction.

The principal aims of the MSc programme are:

- To provide advanced training in four types of research skill: research methodologies; written and oral communication; critical theoretical and analytical skills; research project planning and completion.
- To provide students with good empirical and theoretical knowledge and understanding of the major topics and concepts in social data science as well as a general understanding of the interplay between computational and social systems.
- To provide students with advanced empirical and theoretical knowledge and understanding of key topics and concepts in areas relating to the student's particular interest.
- To enable students to think strategically about evolving technologies and their implications for policy and practice.
- To assess students' progress through supervision and mechanisms of formal assessment.
- To provide appropriate pastoral support through the allocation of personal supervisors in conjunction with the system in place at college level.

2.1.2 Programme objectives and outcomes.

The objectives of the MSc in Social Data Science are that, on completion of the course, students will have:

1. Designed a research project that applies tools and methods from data science to address a social science research question.
2. Evaluated and compared multiple computational approaches to a research question and chosen the most appropriate or efficient one.
3. Communicated across disciplines and explained research outcomes in an accessible language and to a wide audience.
4. Obtained a critical understanding of the uses and limitations of current computational approaches to social science questions and become responsive to emerging practices and challenges.
5. Evaluated and compared multiple computational approaches to a scientific challenge and chosen the most appropriate or efficient one.
6. Developed a wide-ranging appreciation of both contemporary social and political science theories and data science approaches to tackling research questions related to these theories.
7. Manipulated and analysed large volumes of heterogeneous data to answer social science research questions by taking advantage of parallel, distributed, and other emerging computation methods.
8. Identified the current state-of-the art for analysing large-scale human behavioural data and either innovated with new methods or adapted existing methods to the specific challenges inherent with data related to human behaviour.
9. Applied techniques and tools from software engineering to build robust, reliable, and maintainable tools for analysing, visualising, and modelling data.

2.1.3 Related teaching and learning strategies and methods

Teaching methods are a combination of lectures, classes and one-on-one supervision meetings.

Detailed reading lists are available for each paper on the [MSc in Social Data Science page](#) of the OII Website at and on the University of Oxford online reading list platform [ORLO](#), as well as on Canvas. Students are expected to undertake whatever assignments are set by course providers in addition to work required for formal assessment.

Regular essay writing and algorithm implementation will ensure that students practice and develop skills of analysis, explication and argumentation as well as ensuring that they have an in-depth understanding of the material covered.

To ensure that students develop oral as well as written communication skills, they will be asked to give class presentations in addition to, or in place of written work, and reading lists will be provided to support both purposes.

Formative written work will be marked and returned to students with comments to support student progress through the course. Summative work will be marked, and feedback provided for written summative work as allowed by the examining conventions.

2.2 Skills and attributes

Students will have the opportunity to develop the following skills over the course of the MSc:

2.2.1 Intellectual skills

1. The capacity to read and evaluate original research articles.
2. Theoretical knowledge and understanding of the major topics, approaches and research methods within social data science.
3. The ability to read, critique, and write well-structured software code.
4. Ability to think strategically about new technologies and their implications for policy and practice.
5. General critical and analytical skills.
6. The ability to plan, conduct and write up a programme of original research.

Related teaching and learning strategies and methods

1-5 are taught mainly through class teaching and supervision; 6 is taught primarily through the completion of the thesis, during which time the student will have individual tutorials to discuss the research question and research design, monitor progress and review drafts.

Assessment

These intellectual skills will be assessed through the completion of coursework, through unseen examinations, and through the thesis.

2.2.2 Practical skills

1. Effective oral and written presentation and communication skills.
2. Research methods skills.
3. Use of ICTs for communication and collaborative working.

Related teaching and learning strategies and methods

1 is taught mainly through class teaching and supervision as all students will write regular essays as well as making presentations to the class. 2 is taught through the intensive courses and research methods training. 3 is taught mainly through class teaching and the regular use of the Canvas VLE and other similar tools across the course.

Assessment

These skills will be assessed through satisfactory completion of all class assignments, the completion of coursework, through the unseen examinations, and by means of the thesis. 3 is formatively, not summatively assessed, through students' interaction with supervisors and class teachers.

2.2.3 Transferable skills

1. Critical analysis.
2. Oral and written communication skills.
3. Self-organisation, including time management.
4. Research design and project planning.
5. Use of ICTs for communication and collaborative working.

Related teaching and learning strategies and methods

1-3 are taught mainly through class teaching and supervision and specifically in the work which students prepare for class essays and presentations, and in preparation of coursework and the thesis. 4 is taught through the compulsory research methods training and through engagement with supervisors in the preparation of the thesis. 5 is taught mainly through class teaching and the regular use of the Canvas VLE and other similar tools across the course.

Assessment

These transferable skills will be assessed through satisfactory completion of all class assignments, the completion of coursework, through the unseen examinations, and by means of the thesis. 3 is formatively, not summatively assessed, through students' interaction with supervisors and class tutors.

2.2.4   Achievement of learning outcomes

In summary, to ensure that all OII MSc students achieve the learning outcomes identified in the previous section, they must:

1. Attend all classes, seminars, lectures, or meetings as the OII Graduate Studies Committee deems necessary.
2. Complete all assignments (written, practical, or oral) as set by class teachers for the options taken.
3. Submit to the examiners the coursework required for formal assessment.
4. Sit and pass the required unseen examinations required for the courses they have taken which use examinations as the assessment method.
5. Submit to the examiners a thesis of up to 15,000 words.

1 and 2 will be assessed by the supervisor, class teacher and course provider. 3, 4 and 5 will be assessed and marked in accordance with Examiners' Guidelines (see **Examination and marking guidelines**). Supervisors will also provide guidance, informal advice and assessment during meetings with their student supervisees.

2.3   Programme structure and schedule

The MSc degree is a one-year (full-time) taught course running from the beginning of Michaelmas term until August 1st in the year of completion, or the nearest working day if 1st August falls at the weekend.

Oxford University has three terms each of eight-week duration. These terms are called: Michaelmas Term (October to December); Hilary Term (January to March); Trinity Term (April to June).

Full-time students will normally be expected to be in residence at Oxford for each of the 8 weeks of the three terms. You will be free to leave Oxford after the end of each term but are advised to return during the week prior to the start of the next term (referred to as 0th week).

You will need to submit your thesis via the Assignment Submission Inspera site of the weekday on or nearest after the 1st of August of the year in which the degree is to be completed.

This course is comprised of the following seven components:

Introduction to Data Science and Machine Learning

This assesses understanding of taught content presented in the courses Fundamentals of Social Data Science in Python and Machine Learning, classes for which take place in Michaelmas Term. It is examined through a written submission in the form of a short-duration, take-home paper consisting of a series of practical exercises and short-form essay questions.

Research Design for Social Data Science

Research Design for Social Data Science is taught during Michaelmas Term and is examined through two coursework submissions.

Data and Society

This class is taught over two terms (Data and Society I in Michaelmas Term and Data and Society II in Hilary Term). Both parts are assessed by written coursework.

Applied Analytical Statistics

This class is taught during Hilary Term and will be examined through written coursework.

Two option papers

The two option papers, lasting eight weeks each, will be chosen in a specialised subject area from the list of option courses (see **Section 2.3.6**), or another paper agreed by the Director of Graduate Studies. The papers will be assessed by coursework or written examination.

In exceptional circumstances an option paper from another Oxford Master's degree (including the OII's MSc in Social Science of the Internet) may be taken, as long as this is relevant to your studies and formally agreed with your supervisor, the course convenor, the MSc Programme Director, the Director of Graduate Studies and, if applicable, the external department's Graduate Studies Committee.

Thesis

A thesis not to exceed 12,000 words, on a topic within the remit of the course, to be specified jointly by supervisor and student, and approved by the Board of Examiners. The topic does not need to be chosen until Hilary term, but is subject to approval by the student's supervisor and the Board of Examiners. One digital copy of the thesis must be submitted via the Assignment Submission Inspera site by noon of the weekday on or nearest to the 1st of August of the year in which the degree is to be completed.

2.3.1 Weightings

Assessment	Weighting
Introduction to Data Science and Machine Learning	15
Applied Analytical Statistics	10
Data and Society I	7.5
Research Design for Social Data Science	7.5
Data and Society II	7.5
Option paper 1	10
Option paper 2	10
Thesis	32.5

2.3.2 Programme schedule

The following tables demonstrate the basic structure of the courses each term and is the minimum set of lectures, seminars and classes that an MSc student is expected to attend (see Appendix D for further details of draft timetables). Students should seek permission from the course convenor if they must miss any of these sessions.

You will also be expected to engage fully in the intellectual life of the department throughout your studies, including attendance at MSc workshops, participation in departmental seminars and our events programme. You are encouraged to participate in discussions at workshops or events, and students should consider ways throughout their studies to express their work to the world at large.

Michaelmas Term	Hilary Term	Trinity Term
Data and Society I	Data and Society II	SDS Thesis Seminar
Research Design for Social Data Science	Applied Analytical Statistics	Thesis
Fundamentals of Social Data Science in Python	Option Paper 1	
Machine Learning	Option Paper 2	

There are many other lectures and seminars in Oxford that are of interest to OII students. Please consult the lecture list and University events page for details.

Students are responsible for their own academic progress and are expected to spend at least 40 hours on coursework and studying each week during term. You will also need to do some study during vacations.

It is a fundamental component of the Oxford educational system that students engage in individual reading and study in order to broaden and deepen their knowledge of their chosen field. All students will be expected to read widely in preparation for weekly classes and lectures, moving beyond the core texts on reading lists to develop both breadth and depth in their understanding of the literature.

- For courses meeting once a week during Michaelmas and Hilary terms, MSc students are advised to allocate between 10 and 15 hours of preparation each week for each course and/or paper they undertake.
- For intensive courses meeting three times a week, MSc students are advised to allocate approximately 20 hours each week. This includes classroom time for lectures, seminars, labs, and Teaching Assistant sessions. Details of the TA sessions will be circulated during induction week.
- In Trinity term students should devote their time to their thesis, which includes attending the weekly thesis seminar (Weeks 1-8).

Students should note that this leaves very little time during the week for any paid employment.

Please see Appendix D for a draft course timetable for 2025-26. Please note that this may be subject to further changes but students will be notified and the most up-to-date schedule will be uploaded on Canvas.

2.3.3 Programme deadlines

The following is the overall assessment timetable for the degree. This is provided as guidance only: in case of changes, the course reading list on Canvas and any updates provided by the department's administration should be followed. This timetable does not include 'formative assessments' (i.e. those which do not count towards your final degree mark). You will be notified of these by your course convenors.

Course	Submission Deadline	Marks Available
Michaelmas Term		
Introduction to Data Science and Machine Learning	Tuesday Week 10 Michaelmas term	End of March
Research Design for Social Data Science	Thursday Week 8 Michaelmas Term and Thursday Week 0 Hilary term	End of March

Data and Society I	Thursday Week 0 Hilary term	End of March
Hilary Term		
Applied Analytical Statistics	Thursday Week Minus 1 Trinity Term	End of June
Data and Society II	Thursday Week 10 Hilary Term	End of June
Options (2 courses)	Thursday Week 0 Trinity term	End of June
Trinity Term		
Thesis	1st August (or the closest working day after when this falls on a weekend)	End of September

2.3.4   Nomenclature

Please see a list of terms used to refer to the different types of teaching sessions at Oxford:

- Lecture: Convenor-led session. May be live or pre-recorded
- Daily briefing: live, convenor-led session for Q&A about a pre-recorded lecture
- Tutorial: Session led by Teaching Assistant(s) for completing practical exercises related to the lectures
- TA session: discussion/workshop style session led by Teaching Assistants (TAs), related to the lectures

These terms are convention, not regulation, although we encourage instructors to use consistent terminology. Other terms sometimes used include a "webinar", which is an optional online lecture and "surgery", which is a name for a drop-in session where general questions about work are asked. Surgeries are often ad hoc and may be led by either an instructor or a TA. Typically, TA sessions, tutorials and surgeries are not recorded. This is to facilitate a safe space for students to ask any questions about the material.

2.3.5   Course details: core papers

As reading lists are likely to be updated by course tutors throughout the academic year, please refer to the lists on Canvas for the most up-to-date versions, which is integrated with the University of Oxford online reading list platform ORLO.

Fundamentals of Social Data Science in Python

Python fundamentals including version control, data cleaning/wrangling, server access, and APIs.

Machine Learning

Machine learning technologies and applications. Overview of machine learning, optimization, cluster analysis, classification, Gaussian processes, Expectation-Maximization and variational analysis, neural networks and deep learning.

Data and Society I and II

Providing an intellectual framework for social data science within the landscape of scientific inquiry, including important external issues and challenges that shape the contexts in which social data science takes place and how these influence what social data science is and is not.

Applied Analytical Statistics

Focussing on the tools and techniques used by social scientists to understand, describe and analyse (quantitative) data. The focus will be on learning how to apply practical statistics in a social research context (rather than looking at fundamental mathematical foundations of statistical concepts).

Research Design for Social Data Science

Core methods and understandings of data science—reliability, robustness, validity, reproducibility, predictive accuracy—effective research design, and ethical research.

Thesis seminar

Cohort-building course with emphasis on research skills development in the run-up to the thesis. Students will be invited to present their thesis work-in-progress to the cohort during scheduled sessions. Fellow students will be invited to give feedback.

2.3.6   Course details: option papers

Students should discuss with their supervisor which two option papers they would like to take, as early as possible in Michaelmas term. Substantive options are taught in weeks 1-8 of Hilary Term.

Teaching in some options may not be available every year. Courses must also have a minimum number of students signed up in order to run (normally at least 3), and at the discretion of the convenor.

Students are strongly encouraged to carefully review course reading lists before settling on a final decision as these provide detailed information on what to expect from each course.

Details on the timetables for the courses can be found in Appendix D, and on Canvas.

- AI for Policymaking
- Applied Machine Learning with LLMs
- Algorithmic Fairness and Accountability
- Data-driven Network Science
- Internet Economics
- Social Data Science in Practise

2.4   Choosing option courses

2.4.1   Examination entry process

Option selection is done by registering for assessments in the Student Self-Service portal. Students will be invited by email to enter for their core and option examinations (both sit-down examinations and submitted assessments) when the examination entry window opens. As part of this entry, students indicate their option course choices. Part-time students complete this entry twice, normally entering for two option courses in their first year and making one further option course choice in their second year.

The deadline is usually Thursday Week 4 in Michaelmas Term. Further information on examination entry is available on the Oxford student website.

2.4.2   Changing option course choices

If a student wishes to change their options after the examination entry window, this can be done using the change of options form available from their college office. Applications for alterations of options will not be processed until a late entry fee payment has been received. Payment for late alterations of options is made via the University's online shop.

2.4.3   Auditing courses

Auditing means attending a course without taking that course as credit. It may be possible, in exceptional circumstances and subject to capacity and the pedagogical needs of the course, for a student to audit an option paper or method option paper in addition to those on which they are formally registered. Auditors must normally fully commit to attending all of the classes for the course and fully engaging in class discussions. Auditors may also be required to complete the formative assessments for the course.

Students are advised that Hilary Term is extremely demanding and the extra work entailed in auditing a course should only be undertaken where a clear plan is in place to minimize the impact on other learning activities.

Students must complete an OII Audit Request Form with their supervisor, available on Canvas, and give a reason for why they think the course would be beneficial to their research. The form should be submitted by Friday of week 8 of Michaelmas Term. Students will be notified by the end of week 10 if they have successfully secured a place on the course as an auditor.

2.5   Written examinations

2.5.1 Examination timetable

The Examination Schools publish the timetables as early as possible and no later than five weeks before the start of the examination. Please see further details on where to access the timetables at http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams/timetables.

2.5.2 Sitting your in-person examinations

Information on (a) the standards of conduct expected in examinations and (b) 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 on the Oxford Students website: http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams/guidance.

2.5.3 Sitting your online examinations

Online exams are taken in Inspera. 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 (www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams/online-exams).

Online exams require you to adhere to the University's Honour Code (www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams/open-book/honour-code) and you should read this in advance of any online exams.

2.5.4 Exam adjustments

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. For more information on examination adjustments please see the Examination Adjustments page of the Oxford Students website: https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams/examination-adjustments.

2.5.5 Exam resits

If a student fails an exam they will be permitted to retake it on one further occasion only, as specified in the degree's Examining Conventions. The exams must be resat at the next opportunity the exam is usually offered, which is generally in the following academic year. Students will need to complete another examination form which will be sent by the college to complete and must be completed by the stated entry date. The Examinations Schools will confirm examination details nearer the time and date. For further information please refer to the Examination Schools at: https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams/examination-entry.

2.5.6 Excusal from written examinations

In the event of being unable to sit an exam due to 'illness or other urgent cause that is unforeseeable, unavoidable and/or insurmountable', students may submit an application for excusal from an examination up to 4 weeks before the exam and up to 14 days after the exam. This application should be made via the student's college. If a student is excused from an examination, they will be given the opportunity to sit the exam as a rescheduled first attempt on the next available date, usually during Trinity Term.

You cannot be excused from an exam if you have attended any part of the exam or if you have downloaded an open book exam paper. If you become unwell during an exam you should submit a mitigating circumstances notice to the examiners.

2.6 Submission of summative coursework

2.6.1 Instructions for submitting coursework

All written summative assessments, including the thesis, must be submitted electronically via the Assignment Submission Inspera site by the stated deadline. Ensure you are familiar with the online submission process in advance of any deadline. Full information is provided on the Oxford students website (www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams/submission).

Please note that assignments should only ever be identified by candidate number. Students should not put their name or college anywhere on the submitted work. All summative submissions should have an OII assignment coversheet as the first page, which will be available to students on Canvas.

Students will be asked to tick a box when submitting via Inspera to certify that they are the sole author of the work and the assignment will automatically be put through plagiarism detection software.

Work submitted after the deadline will be processed in the standard manner and, in addition, the late submission will be reported to the Proctors' Office. If a student is concerned that they will not meet the deadline they must contact their college office or the MSc Programme Coordinator for advice.

If anything goes wrong with a student's submission, then they should email a copy of their assignment to msc@oii.ox.ac.uk immediately. In cases where a technical fault that is later determined to be a fault of the Inspera system (and not a fault of your computer) prevents a student from submitting the assessment on time, having a time stamped email message will help the Proctors determine if the assessment will be accepted. Students should note that waiting until the last minute to submit materials is not advisable since Inspera can run slowly at peak submission times and this is not considered a technical fault.

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. Full information is available on the Oxford Student website.

Further instructions on using Inspera can be found on Canvas.

2.6.2   Resubmission of coursework

If a student fails any coursework they must resubmit. Students will need to complete another examination form which will be sent by the college to complete and must be completed by the stated entry date. Please refer to Appendix E: Examining Conventions for further information on resubmission deadlines. For further information please refer to the Examination Entry webpage.

2.6.3   Potential overlap between coursework

Students should note that any two examinations (including the thesis) are distinct pieces of scholarship and will be marked as separate units of assessed work, independent of each other. This has two implications: first, if a student feels that one should draw on the other, a citation or reference to that earlier piece of work should be provided in accordance with usual best practice for academic citation (but should use the student's candidate number rather than name to maintain anonymity). Second, students are reminded that they may not copy whole sections between two pieces of examined work. The thesis, for example, may build on work undertaken in assessed coursework for an Option paper, but the material must be rewritten explicitly for the thesis. Please also refer to **section 3.5.2** for information on plagiarism.

2.6.4   Managing submission deadlines

Throughout your degree programme you will encounter a series of deadlines which will include formative assessments (work submitted to test and develop your understanding of material and on which you will receive feedback), and summative assessments (those which contribute towards progression and/or your final degree outcome and on which you may receive feedback) such as coursework assignments and/or your final dissertation/thesis or project.

Deadlines are carefully set and optimised to ensure the timely provision of feedback (to support your continued learning) and to help to balance your workload across the degree programme. In particular, care will have been taken as far as possible not to cluster submission deadlines or for these to fall close other modes of assessment such as written examinations. Meeting your deadlines will enable you to progress through the course with the optimum workload balance, and will ensure your performance on future assessments isn't negatively impacted.

Plan ahead

You are strongly encouraged to implement the following steps, which will help you to manage your workload and be able to meet deadlines:

- Always plan ahead and ensure you know the key deadlines for your programme throughout the year.

- When taking on any additional responsibilities, consider the workload of these in relation to your assessment schedule. Don't take on responsibilities which will take significant time away from preparing for assessment.

- Make sure you know both when work will be set and due for submission so you know how much time you have to complete of each task – it may be helpful to map this out in your diary/calendar.

- Carefully check your understanding of the work required, the resources you may need to access and their availability, and familiarise yourself with the assessment criteria set out in the examination conventions for your programme.

- If in doubt, always discuss requirements with your supervisor and/or Course Director.

- You may also find it helpful to seek informal peer support by talking to current DPhil students who have recently completed your programme.

- Making a start is often the hardest part so try to break down work into smaller sections and set yourself key milestones along the way, build in some contingency time, and always avoid leaving things to the last few weeks or days.

- If preparing written work for assessment (such as a dissertation), start writing as early as possible, don't wait until the reading and thinking is 'done'. Social scientists often write to think, and you need to make sure you leave plenty of time for the thinking, as this is where your original insights will occur.

- Try to also be conscious of when to stop - there will always be something which could be further researched, redrafted or refined, but try to understand when something is good enough.

Dealing with the unexpected

Even with the best planning occasionally something unexpected may happen which disrupts your progress. Always be ready to re-prioritise and if you are unsure how to proceed, discuss with your supervisor and/or Course Directors and they will be able to help you re-plan and decide how best to prioritise – for example, they may be able to offer greater flexibility on formative deadlines to enable you to meet summative deadlines. They may also be able to give further guidance on readings and co-curricular activities to prioritise.

In exceptional circumstances however, it is possible to apply for an extension to summative deadlines, and your college will be able to support you with the process, but always consider this the last resort. While an extension may be necessary in some cases where you have genuinely lost sufficient time that you are unable to complete a piece of work, be cognisant of the potential knock-on effects of extension also. There may include:

- Delays in receiving feedback which will support your further studies.

- Reduced time to complete other work due to clustering of deadlines.

- Delays in receiving marks, and in particular at the end of your programme extensions to the deadline for your dissertation/thesis may mean you receive your degree outcome later.

- Delayed completion of your programme could impact on being able to progress to further study or take up offers of employment and may delay your graduation so you cannot attend a Degree Ceremony with your peers.

If you do think you will need an extension, do consider discussing this with your supervisor and/or Course Director as well as with your college, as they will be well placed to help you to consider the academic impacts, and as noted above, may be able to provide alternative suggestions for how to reprioritise your work to enable you to meet the original deadline.

2.7   Problems completing your assessments

2.7.1   Extensions to coursework deadlines

Under exceptional circumstances, for example due to personal or family illness, students can apply for a deadline extension for any coursework that counts towards their final mark.

Students will need to apply to the Senior Tutor in their college who will then write to the Proctors. Deadline extensions should be applied for in advance wherever possible and should be accompanied by a medical note or

other third-party evidence. The Proctors then decide if the reason is valid and inform the examiners. The department and individual course convenors or lecturers **cannot** grant extensions.

For full details of how to apply for an extension please see the problems completing your assessments guidance on the Oxford Student portal.

2.7.2   Declaring illness and other mitigating circumstances

Students whose work is unavoidably interrupted for any significant period due to illness should consider applying for a suspension of status until the following academic year. A student whose illness is not serious enough, or of too short duration to justify suspension of status, may, nevertheless, feel that it is likely to have had an adverse effect on their performance in certain assessments.

In this case, the student should submit a mitigating circumstances notice to the examiners (MCE) via Student Self-Service, for the consideration of the Board of Examiners. For technical instructions on submitting an MCE notice please refer to the Student self service manual, section 7.7. Alternatively, your College Office can submit an MCE on your behalf, but you will need to supply them with a student impact statement and any supporting evidence.

You should carefully read the guidance for students on the Consideration of mitigating circumstances by examiners. The most important part of your MCE is the statement you provide.

The examiners will consider the statement of mitigating circumstances and any supporting documentation very carefully during the Exam Board meeting. You will be able to view the outcome of your MCE via the results screen in Student Self Service when your year outcome has been released (in September of your final year).

2.7.3   Suspension of status

Suspension of status is the formal process by which a student can temporarily halt their studies with a view to returning to study later. Since students are expected to complete a graduate taught course within the timescale of the course in question, suspensions of status are rare. If a student cannot work for a particular reason, e.g., illness, family circumstances, and so forth, then application for suspension of status can be sought. MSc students must suspend for an entire year, and cannot suspend for one term, as research students can. Please see section 8.5 for further information.

2.8   Exam Board matters

2.8.1   Examination and marking guidelines

All examination scripts and theses will be identified by candidate number only and will be assessed by two markers internally and referred to the external examiner in cases where the markers are unable to agree a mark.

Following standard university practice, all material will be marked on a marking scale with 50 as the minimum pass mark, marks of 65–69 corresponding to a merit, and marks of 70 and above denoting distinction.

Students with an average of 70 or higher (calculated with the weighting scheme outlined in Section 2.3 Programme Structure) across all elements of the course, and who pass every course on the first attempt will be awarded a distinction as set out in the MSc's Examining Conventions.

Students with an average of 65 or higher across all elements of the course, and who pass every course on the first attempt will be awarded a merit as set out in the MSc's Examining Conventions.

Students must achieve a mark of 50 for each of the components of the course and for each course within the components (core courses, methods courses, option papers, and the thesis) in order to be awarded the degree of MSc. Coursework progress will be monitored by the Graduate Studies Committee and efforts will be made to identify students who require particular assistance.

Please see **Appendix E: Examining Conventions** for more information on marking scales.

2.8.2   Board of Examiners

There will be three internal examiners on the Board of Examiners, one of whom will be Chair of Examiners. There will be one External Examiner appointed by the board members, the appointment being ratified by the Graduate

Studies Committee. The internal examiners for 2025-26 will be Prof Ralph Schroeder (Chair), Prof Joss Wright and Dr Fabian Braesemann. The external examiner for 2025-26 is Dr Lorien Jasny, University of Exeter.

One Examiners' Meeting will be held in each term in order to agree and certify marks. Marks are released according to the following schedule:

Michaelmas Term core courses	End of March (Week 9 Hilary Term)
Hilary Term core and option courses	End of June (Week 10 Trinity Term)
Thesis and final classifications	End of September

2.8.3 Feedback to students

Students will receive regular feedback through their supervisor and the reports uploaded on Graduate Supervision Reporting (GSR). MSc students are also encouraged to speak to the course convenor about any issues or concerns.

During their time in Oxford, students will be expected to undergo both formative and summative assessment. Formative assessment does not contribute to the overall outcome of your degree and has a developmental purpose designed to help you learn more effectively. Summative assessment does contribute to your degree result and is used to evaluate formally the extent to which you have succeeded in meeting the published learning outcomes for your programme of study.

Feedback on formative and summative assessment is an important element of all Oxford's Master's programmes. Feedback on formative assessment e.g. mid-course essays/assignments, should provide guidance on academic writing, will indicate areas of strength and weakness in relation to an assessment task, and will provide an indication of the expectations and standards towards which students should be working. Feedback on summative assessment e.g. end of course assessments and theses, should provide a critical review of the work and suggestions for improvements to enable students to develop their work for future continued study.

Students can expect to receive informal feedback on their progress and on their formatively assessed work. Students will receive feedback on formative assignments for each course throughout the terms. These will come from the course convenors in either written or oral format.

Students will receive formal written feedback on all their summative coursework-based assessments submitted over the year via email, following the ratification of marks and feedback by the Board of Examiners. Students do not receive written feedback on timed examinations. All students will also receive formal written feedback on their thesis, submitted in the final term of the course via email by the end of September in the year of submission.

2.8.4 Complaints and academic appeals

If you are unhappy with an aspect of your assessment you may make a complaint or appeal (see **section 5.2** for more details). Students are strictly prohibited from contacting the markers or examiners directly about any aspect of marking and examination.

2.8.5 Regulation of assessment

The assessed coursework, examinations, and thesis will be under the supervision of the Social Sciences Divisional Board. The subjects of each examination will be determined by regulation by the OII, which shall have the power to arrange courses of instruction for the examination. The OII Graduate Studies Committee will appoint the Board of Examiners consisting of three internal examiners, one of whom will be Chair each year. One external examiner will be nominated by the Board and confirmed by the Graduate Studies Committee, and invited to serve by the Vice Chancellor. Internal marking of coursework and exams will be assessed by the relevant course providers and by another qualified assessor. One examiners' meeting will be held after each term's marking has been completed. Internal and external examiners will be required to produce reports after the examinations for consideration by the Graduate Studies Committee, and the Social Sciences Board.

Examinations will be governed by the Regulations of the Proctors. The University's policy relating to University examination practices for and postgraduate taught courses is detailed in the Exams and Assessment Framework (EAF) which aligns with and expands on the Examination Regulations.

External examiners will verify that standards appropriate to the award, in part by comparison with standards of comparable institutions, are applied. They ensure that the assessment procedures and the regulations governing them are fair and appropriate, that the conduct of the examination and the determination of the awards have been fairly made and that individual student performance has been judged in accordance with the regulations and conventions of the examining board. The external examiners recommended by the Committee will have some experience in teaching and examining at a post-graduate level, and will be research active.

Examiners are expected to report to the Vice-Chancellor in each year in which they act, upon the above issues. This includes:

- the standards demonstrated by the students;
- the extent to which the standards are appropriate to the award;
- the design of assignments and internal marking;
- access by externals to all of the necessary material for assessment;
- students' performance in relation to their peers in this and comparable courses, and the basis for comparisons;
- the policies and procedures relating to external examiners;
- the strengths and weaknesses of the students as a cohort;
- the quality of teaching and learning as indicated by student performance.

Please see **Appendix E: Examining Conventions** for more information on marking scales.

Examination conventions are the formal record of the specific assessment standards for the course or courses to which they apply. They set out how examined work will be marked and how the resulting marks will be used to arrive at a final result and classification of the 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.

2.8.6   Indicators of quality and standards

Standards are monitored by Internal and External Examiners' Reports, and by the comments submitted to examiners by coursework markers, supervisors and tutors. The OII, in turn, monitors standards through the discussions of the Graduate Studies Committee on the basis of the Examiners' reports, student surveys and general feedback received. The Examiners reports can be found on Canvas.

The course has been designed to meet the criteria set out in the ESRC's Postgraduate Training Guidelines, and is a recognised pathway to the OII's ESRC-recognised doctoral programmes.

Some further indication of quality and standards may be gauged by following the success of OII MSc students in winning places for further study at prestigious universities or in presenting research in leading academic conferences.

3   Thesis Preparation and Submission

This section expands upon the provisions of the *Examination Regulations*, which should always be consulted. The following suggestions, in so far as they go beyond the printed regulations, are not obligatory, but they are what the department recommends as clear and acceptable.

Bear in mind that success in writing a thesis is achieved in a number of ways: by an imaginative and extensive search for sources, by a thorough investigation of evidence, by rigour of analysis, by originality of interpretation, and by clarity of presentation.

3.1   Overall thesis guidance

Students are required to submit a thesis on a topic of the student's choice, subject to the agreement of their supervisor and the Board of Examiners. Length of the main thesis is a maximum of 12,000 words, although many excellent master's theses are shorter. Details on calculating length are found in Section 3.4.4.

Students are expected to write up their thesis in Trinity Term and over the summer. The thesis is to be submitted via the Assignment Submission Inspera site by noon of the weekday on or nearest after the 1st of August of the year in which the degree is to be completed.

Students will be expected to present their initial thesis plans at an MSc Research Seminar in Trinity Term. Student presentations will be discussed and feedback provided. Workshops are attended by fellow students, supervisors and the MSc Programme Director.

MSc students must submit an electronic copy of their thesis via the authorised submission platform Inspera by noon of the weekday on or nearest to the 1st of August of the year in which the degree is to be completed. The thesis should bear the student's candidate number (to ensure anonymity), word count and degree on the title page. For students drafting their work in LaTeX rather than a standard word processor, a template file is also available on Canvas.

Please note that assignments should only ever be identified by candidate number. Students should not put their name or college anywhere on the submitted work.

Students who are awarded a Distinction mark for their thesis may be invited to submit a hardbound copy for the OII Library. In the hardbound copy of the thesis the student's candidate number must be replaced by their name but everything else should remain the same (although students may correct minor typos).

For further information about the format and presentation of the thesis, see section 3.4 on thesis preparation.

3.1.1 Choice of thesis topic

The exact topic and title of a thesis require careful thought. It should be a topic which:

- is of interest to the student;
- addresses an interesting and well-specified research question;
- is feasibly researchable (in the sense that the necessary skills and resources are available to the student);
- is appropriately scoped (i.e., is neither too broad nor too narrow);
- can be supervised and researched in Oxford (in terms of the resources available, such as supervisors and libraries);
- does not depend too heavily on confidential information (see below)

The University works upon the assumption that the results of research contained in a thesis belong in the public domain and that subsequent readers should be able to verify any documentary references. You should not therefore embark on research that is heavily dependent on confidential information without first checking with your supervisor that this is likely to be acceptable, and then applying to the Graduate Studies Committee.

It is important to be clear not only about the overall topic of the thesis, but also about the particular questions regarding your topic that you seek to answer and the means by which you do so.

In order to help facilitate the matching of students with thesis advisors, potential supervisors have been asked to document potential thesis ideas and/or the general types of projects they would like to supervise. Students will be provided with this list of project ideas and interests in Week 2 of Michaelmas Term. Students are encouraged to not only read these project ideas and interests, but also to look at the interests and research of faculty on their departmental webpages.

By the start of Hilary term, students will be asked to submit a description of their proposed thesis topic.

By the end of Hilary term, students are asked to confirm their thesis methodology via the ethical approval application process (CUREC).

At the start of Trinity Term, students will be asked to confirm their thesis title and abstract, which enables the department to assign suitable markers.

3.2 Thesis title

Thesis titles should be concise, clear and specific. Titles should be comprehensible to a non-specialist audience. A sub-title, if used, should be separated from the first part of the title by a colon, and it should begin with a capital letter. Titles should contain indications of the precise scope or focus of the work. Many students find that

including a researchable **question** in their title helps to focus the thesis by then answering that question, rather than just describing a phenomenon.

Students will need to complete the thesis title and abstract approval form at the start of Trinity term and should consult with their supervisor before they do so.

The Board of Examiners will then approve thesis titles for each student in the Trinity Term Exam Board meeting. The supervisor will provide academic guidance and oversee the thesis progress. For further information on supervisors' responsibilities, please refer to Section 4.

Students and supervisors are reminded that the thesis must have an integrated argument, and must stand alone as a finished and informative piece of work.

3.2.1   Change of thesis title

Should the focus of a student's research change during work on their thesis, it is important that the student consider whether the current title is still appropriate or whether it should be revised.

If subsequently a student needs to change their thesis title, they will need to write by letter or email to the MSc Programmes Co-ordinator, who will ask the Chair of the Board of Examiners for permission to change the title. Any such request must indicate both the former title and the proposed new title. In cases where the topic has remained the same but the title has changed, only the new and previous titles are required in this request. If the topic of the research has changed significantly, the request should also include an updated short abstract. The final deadline for receipt of requests is **Monday 6th July 2026 by 5:00pm** (or three weeks in advance of the thesis deadline for students who have been given an approved extension by the Proctors).

Please note that MSc students should submit thesis proposal title changes to their supervisor at least **one week** ahead of the July deadline. Late submission of thesis proposal changes will not be tolerated unless prior warning has been communicated or for exceptional circumstances.

3.3   Ethics approval for research projects

The University of Oxford regards research integrity as a core value and has a longstanding commitment to ensuring that it is embedded in its research culture and activity. The University's Academic Integrity in Research: Code of Practice and Procedure states that all its researchers, be they staff, students or visitors, are expected to maintain the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of their research. To facilitate this, the University is guided by the Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC).

All students are required to complete the research integrity online training course for the social and behavioral sciences, offered by Research Support Services, prior to applying for ethical approval. The course takes about three hours to complete, and upon completion, you will receive an email acknowledgement that you have passed the course. It is strongly recommended to complete the Research Integrity course during Michaelmas term, as it is a prerequisite for several option courses taught in Hilary term.

For any CUREC queries, please speak to the Research Facilitation Team (drec@oii.ox.ac.uk).

3.3.1   Ethical approval application process

The University of Oxford regards research integrity as a core value and has a longstanding commitment to ensuring that it is embedded in its research culture and activity. The University's "Academic Integrity in Research: Code of Practice and Procedure" states that all its researchers, be they staff, students or visitors, are expected to maintain the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of their research. To facilitate this, the University is guided by the Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC).

All MSc students must submit a CUREC application prior to commencing any research. **It is very important that no research is undertaken until ethical clearance has been granted**. Retrospective clearance cannot be granted, and the lack of ethical clearance will reduce the integrity of your work, pose reputational damage to the department and University and will likely hinder your ability to publish.

Mandatory Training

Please note that it is compulsory that students complete the [research integrity online training course](#) offered by Research Support Services. The course takes about three hours to complete, and upon completion, you will receive an email acknowledgement that you have passed the course. You should then confirm your completion of the course to the department by filling in the [Research Integrity Introductory Course - Confirmation of Completion form.](#)

Application Process

Applications are submitted via the online ethics application system ([Worktribe](#)). Please refer to the guidance within the [Worktribe ethics applicant user guide.](#)

CUREC applications should be completed in consultation with your thesis supervisor. The form should carefully consider the ethical issues raised by your research.

Applications will be categorised in the system as **low**, **medium** or **high risk**.

- **Low and medium risk** applications (the equivalent of the previous CUREC 1A applications) are reviewed by the DREC **or** by the SSH IDREC if the department does not have its own committee. Applicants should allow **30 calendar days** for the review process.
- **High risk** applications (the equivalent of the previous CUREC 2 applications) are reviewed by the DREC **and** by the SSH IDREC. Applicants should allow **60 calendar days** for the review process.

Please note that **low and medium risk applications take 30 days** to process; **high risk** applications can take up to **60 days** due to the fact that they are externally reviewed. Please see here for more information about the [different risk categories.](#)

For any CUREC queries, please speak to the Secretary of the Committee by emailing drec@oii.ox.ac.uk

Deadlines

Students are encouraged to submit their application (approved by their supervisor) as **early as possible** in Hilary term, with deadlines for submission as follows:

- **Friday Week 8 of Hilary Term (13 March 2026)** - deadline to share draft of CUREC form with supervisor

- **Friday Week 10 of Hilary Term (27 March 2026)** - deadline for submission of CUREC via Worktribe

Students that fail to meet the Friday Week 10 deadline will need to ask their supervisor to send an email to msc@oii.ox.ac.uk and drec@oii.ox.ac.uk explaining when the committee can expect their application.

Review Process

Once applications are submitted to the Departmental Research Ethics Committee (DREC), it will be assessed, and any feedback for amendments will be emailed to the students and supervisors by the Ethics Secretary. Students should respond to feedback within one week, working carefully with their supervisors to ensure all of the feedback is addressed. It is very common for the initial submission to receive feedback, as the committee will help to highlight points that might not have been considered, so please do not feel discouraged if the form requires amendments. A timely response will help prevent any further delays (as applicants taking a long time to respond to reviewer queries is one of the most common reasons for delay in processing ethics applications).

Any questions about the feedback received can be directed to the Research Facilitation team in the first instance, via drec@oii.ox.ac.uk.

Approval

Once approved, you will receive a notification via Worktribe that your application has received a favourable response from the DREC. At this point you will be able to download your formal ethical approval letter with a CUREC reference number from Worktribe. Details of how to do this are in the [Worktribe applicant user guide](#). You will need to quote your CUREC reference number in your supporting documents, and in any correspondence with the Research Facilitation team.

Amendments

It is important to reflect on the impact of your research when it is taking place and your research might need to change even after you have received ethical approval.

Please keep the Research Facilitation team informed if this is the case as amendments will require the resubmission of your application in Worktribe.

Amendments are classified as either 'minor' or 'major':

- Major [30/60-day processing time, assessed by OII DREC] (e.g. changes to methodology, participants, record collection, country change, safety)

- Minor [5 days processing time, assessed by Research Facilitation Team]: (e.g. Change of supervisor / research team, contact details, change of location in the same country)

Further details here on major and minor changes can be found on [the Research Support FAQ page](#).

3.3.2   Travel for research purposes

Occasionally, MSc students may need to travel in order to conduct their research. If your research will involve fieldwork or travel, you will need to submit the following documents as part of your ethics application:

- [Travel insurance](#)
- [Travel and fieldwork risk assessment](#)

You will need to complete these forms, in consultation with your supervisor. The DREC Team also administers travel management for the department, so if there are any amendments required to these forms, the DREC Team will email feedback to you.

Even if you plan to travel to your home country to undertake research, you will still be required to complete the Travel Insurance and travel and fieldwork risk assessment. This is due to the fact that by undertaking research, you will be conducting University business and not there just in a personal capacity.

Travel Insurance and a travel and fieldwork risk assessment are required for any research-related activity, including conference attendance. If you have any questions regarding this, please contact travel@oii.ox.ac.uk.

3.4   Thesis preparation

3.4.1   Introduction

An introduction to a thesis is crucial to clarifying the thesis's purpose and character. The following are among the items which you might wish to consider including in an introduction:

- A short explanation of the thesis topic and the reasons for choosing it.
- A listing of the principal questions that the thesis seeks to answer.
- A summary of the main existing views or conventional wisdom about your subject.
- An indication of how the thesis confirms or challenges these views; what is its contribution?
- An account of the types of primary and secondary sources used, and a discussion of the problems associated with these sources.
- An explanation of the main methods of analysis/intellectual approaches used in the thesis.
- An indication of what the thesis has not done: what parts of the subject were neglected, what sources were ignored or unavailable, what questions were not asked, what methodologies were not used.

3.4.2   Writing

Habits and timetable

It is essential to keep in the habit of writing, and not to procrastinate on the grounds that further sources must be sought or more reading is necessary. Often the process of writing itself helps to clarify the precise areas on which more information is still needed, and to refine the questions that should be asked in respect of the topic. In

consultation with the supervisor, it is important to set a business-like timetable for completion of each chapter section of the thesis, and stick to it.

Back-up copies

Please keep ample back-up copies of all parts of your work, and keep them where they cannot be corrupted or lost. You are strongly advised to set your computer to save work automatically at regular intervals. Data loss due to hardware faults, software crashes, loss or theft, or similar causes is not sufficient grounds for an extension and students must take full responsibility for ensuring a back-up of their work is always available.

The University makes available synchronised data back-ups available. This is currently through Microsoft's OneDrive. We strongly encourage students to use OneDrive. This is especially the case if students are using sensitive data (such as named transcripts) and should not use an unapproved third-party cloud services back-up solution such as Google Drive or Dropbox.

English

A thesis must be in the English language and should, as far as humanly possible, be written in plain and comprehensible English. Good syntax and punctuation are vital.

Students should not think that because they are writing an academic thesis, they must use long and complicated sentences. Rather, the principal goal of a scientific writer is to communicate clearly, which is often achieved through the use of simple but well-crafted use of language.

For practical (and sometimes entertaining) guides to good (and bad) English, see:

- Sir Ernest Gowers, *The Complete Plain Words*, rev. edn., Penguin Books, London, 1987.
- William Strunk and E.B. White, *The Elements of Style*, 4th edn., Allyn and Bacon, Boston, 1999.
- Lynne Truss, *Eats, Shoots and Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation*, Profile Books, London, 2003.

See also Fowler's *Modern English Usage*, published by Oxford University Press.

Correcting English is not the responsibility of your supervisor. If you are not a native speaker of English, it is your responsibility to ensure that your thesis is written in correct and lucid English. Courses in English as a second language and in academic writing are available at the University's Language Centre.

Style

A thesis should have a clear and consistent style so far as matters of spelling, capitalisation, abbreviation, dates, foreign words, references, bibliography, etc. are concerned.

Dates should be rendered consistently both in text and footnotes.

Students should be similarly consistent about their use of quotation marks. They should use *either* single *or* double as the default, not a mixture. The precise choice of style in such matters partly depends on what is most appropriate to the particular subject matter of the thesis, and in some cases on the form of publication ultimately sought.

Useful guides to style containing much material of particular relevance to academic theses include:

- P.J. Dunleavy, *Authoring a PhD*: *How to plan, draft, write and finish a doctoral dissertation or thesis*. Palgrave, 2003
- R. E. Allen, *The Oxford Writers' Dictionary* (or else its immediate predecessor, *The Oxford Dictionary for Writers and Editors*), Oxford University Press.
- Robert Ritter, *The Oxford Guide to Style*, Oxford University Press.
- Margaret Mahan, *The Chicago Manual of Style*, University of Chicago Press.
- Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, Heinemann, London, 1982; and University of Chicago Press, sixth edition 1996.

Most academic journals also provide at least brief guidance on style and footnoting.

Figures and tables

Figures and tables should, if at all possible, be near the text that refers to them. All included figures and tables should be consecutively numbered and referred to somewhere in the text. Captions usually appear below figures but above tables.

Headings and subheadings

In most theses it is important not only that each section has a clear and informative title, but also that there is a consistent system of headings and sub-headings to assist the reader (and possibly the writer too) in following the narrative argument of the thesis. Very often a hierarchy of headings is needed. One quite common way of establishing a hierarchy is to have major section breaks centred and in larger type, and lesser ones set left and in the same size type as the main body of the text (albeit distinguished from it by being in bold, italics or similar). Many variations in between are possible, the number of levels being dependent on the nature of the material. Work out a clear and consistent hierarchy of headings appropriate to your subject, and then stick to it.

Sections should be consecutively numbered in a fashion that reflects their place in the overall hierarchy of the theses. For example, the second sub-sub section of the third sub-section of the first section might be numbered 1.3.2.

3.4.3   References

References are an important part of a thesis. They enable you to provide an indication of your skill and judiciousness in use of sources, and they assist the reader in understanding and evaluating what you are saying. They can also be one line of protection against accusations of plagiarism – the presentation of another person's work as your own. The American Psychological Association's style, otherwise known as **APA style**, is the OII recommended referencing style. This reference style can be used in LaTeX with the apacite package. The OII library has copies of the APA style guide and related reference works; additional information is available online at http://www.apastyle.org/.

Apart from indicating a clear preference that footnotes should be at the bottom of each page, the *Examination Regulations* give no guidance on a preferred style for reference notes. The Graduate Studies Committee has therefore issued the following guidelines for footnotes:

- Any system of footnoting is acceptable, provided it is **rational, unambiguous** and **consistent.** Guidance may be sought from works mentioned above.
- Footnotes should, if at all possible, be at the foot of the page to which they refer. Alternatively, they may be grouped at the end of the thesis. They should not be grouped at the ends of chapters. When they are grouped at the end of a thesis, two separate copies of footnotes, separately bound or stapled, should be enclosed with the thesis for the examiners' use.
- In almost all footnoting systems, book and journal titles should be either underlined or italicised. Italics are preferred. Article and chapter titles should be in quotation marks.

Be consistent about these matters.

3.4.4   Thesis length

The maximum length for an MSc thesis is not to exceed 12,000 words. Please note that this is a maximum limit and many theses with quantitative analysis or formal modelling are likely to be shorter. All theses should take a parsimonious approach to word length: the typical MSc Social Data Science Internet thesis is 8,000-12,000 words.

In calculating the MSc thesis length this should include the following:

- Main body
- Footnotes
- Figures—counts in terms of word equivalents in the figure
- Tables

The following are not counted in the word length:

- Title Page
- Abstract
- Table of contents
- Table of figures

- Appendices: Any appendix does not count toward the word count, but students should be advised that examiners are not required to read appendices as part of the marking process, although they may choose to do so. As such, it should contain only supporting material.
- Bibliography

3.5   Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

3.5.1   Intellectual property rights

As someone undertaking research and writing, students need to be aware of the importance of copyright and other intellectual property rights issues in relation to your own and other people's work. Students need to learn about the possibilities and problems of academic and commercial exploitation of their research and writing. This includes the terms of contracts with publishers, universities and other bodies. It also includes the avoidance of plagiarism, addressed below.

Much help and advice is available on these matters, including from the student's supervisor and other members of the OII's staff with experience of different types of research, publication and employment contract. For information about Oxford University's facilities for help in this area, and its intellectual property policy generally, see https://researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/innovation/intellectual-property.

3.5.2   Plagiarism

The official University guidance on plagiarism is available on the Oxford student website. We have summarised some of the key elements that students have questions about below, but students should consider the university guidelines as taking precedence in case of conflicting information.

Students are encouraged to take an online course which has been developed to provide a useful overview of the issues surrounding plagiarism and practical ways to avoid it.

Plagiarism is the presentation of any part, or the substance of any part, of another person's work (including the work of other students) as if it were your own. It can take the form of unacknowledged quotation and of substantial unattributed paraphrase. It is not acceptable for any of your academic work to incorporate plagiarised material. This includes essays and presentations as well as material submitted as coursework or as part of a formal examination.

Auto-plagiarism is the presentation of any part, or the substance of any part, of your own pre-existing work as if it were novel. It can take the form of unacknowledged quotation and of substantial unattributed paraphrase. It is not acceptable for any of your academic work to incorporate auto-plagiarised material. Any summatively assessed work submitted during the MSc or another degree is considered pre-existing work. It is therefore not permitted to reuse substantive elements of a summative essay in a later summative submission (including the thesis). Formatively assessed work is not considered pre-existing work for the purpose of auto-plagiarism.

If you employ good scholarly practice in your written work – for example, by attributing quotations and using only legitimate and acknowledged paraphrase – there is little danger that you will be accused of plagiarism unjustifiably. Written work should involve the use and discussion of material written by others with due acknowledgement and with complete references given. This is standard practice among scholars and can be clearly distinguished from appropriating without acknowledgement and presenting material produced by others as your own.

The University employs a series of sophisticated software applications and other methods to detect plagiarism in submitted work. They regularly monitor on-line essay banks, essay-writing services, and other potential sources of material. When submitting an assignment through the Summative Assignment Submission Inspera page students must certify that they agree to their work being checked for plagiarism using Turnitin software.'Turnitin' is an electronic plagiarism detection software. It helps detect potential plagiarism by comparing submitted assignments to databases of electronic written work. Each assignment that is submitted through Turnitin is given a report with information about which parts of the work might have been improperly cited or plagiarised.

Plagiarism is a disciplinary offence for which offenders can expect to receive severe penalties. For example, the University has the statutory power to deprive somebody of a degree or other qualification after it has been awarded, if it is proved that it was obtained unfairly (for example, if a thesis or submitted coursework is found to contain plagiarised material). The relevant disciplinary regulations are:

4. No candidate shall present for an examination as his or her own work any part or the substance of any part of another person's work.

5. In any written work (whether thesis, dissertation, essay, coursework, or written examinations) passages quoted or closely paraphrased from another person's work must be identified as quotations or paraphrases, and the source of the quoted or paraphrased material must be clearly acknowledged.

Please also see the Oxford Student Skills webpage for further information on advice on academic good practice.

3.5.3   Use of AI in summative assessment

The University's approach to generative AI is to embrace its transformative potential AI in education, supported by training and guidance which emphasises ethical usage, the importance of critical thinking, and responsible application in line with University policies. Guidance on the safe and responsible use of these tools has been updated for this academic year.

The University's updated policy on AI in summative assessment will come into effect from Michaelmas 2025.

For each element of summative assessment, you will be given prior written notice of whether and how the use of AI is permitted. You are fully responsible for the accuracy, originality, and quality of work you submit for assessment, and you must follow the rules on AI use for each specific assessment you are taking. Where AI is permitted, you will also be required to acknowledge use of AI as part of the summative assessment submission and make a formal declaration of this use. Full details of the OII's declaration process will be given during Michaelmas term.

Any unauthorised use of AI in work submitted for assessment constitutes cheating and plagiarism under University rules, penalties for which include failing the relevant assessment and, in appropriate cases, expulsion. Cases of suspected unauthorised use of AI will be handled under the usual disciplinary Regulations and using the associated processes.

As stipulated in the examination regulations for this degree, markers may examine any candidate viva voce. Insofar as detection of AI is still in its infancy, the department considers it is plausible and academically sensible to reserve this right to ensure that students can fluently express the concepts and arguments presented in their written work where there is any doubt over AI use and authorship.

3.6   Thesis submission

3.6.1   Overall

The thesis must:

- be of no more than the maximum word count (no more than 12,000 words for MSc students), not counting bibliography and appendices
- include a title page (see below)
- include an abstract (see below)
- be submitted in English

3.6.2   Title page

The title page (i.e., the first printed page after the front cover) should contain the following information:

- Title (and subtitle, if any).
- Master's thesis submissions should **not** include the author's name or college on the title page, but must include the student's candidate number.
- Words to the effect of 'Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MSc in Social Data Science at the Oxford Internet Institute at the University of Oxford'.
- Month and year, or else the Oxford term and year, in which the thesis was submitted.
- The exact word count of the whole thesis (see **Section 3.4.4** above for details).

3.6.3   Abstract

Theses must have an abstract of up to 300 words, which should fit on one side of a single sheet of A4 paper and should be placed immediately after the title page.

The abstract should be a very clear summary of the subject matter of the thesis, its aims, scope, principal sources, central argument and conclusions. The abstract should be self-standing, and contain all the information on the title page of the thesis. It should be comprehensible to non-specialists, and be suitable for use in general surveys such as Aslib, *Index to Theses*, 'Choice of thesis topic', etc.

3.6.4   Word processing

The thesis should be:

- word processed ideally with LaTeX although Word and other software are acceptable;
- with a margin of 3.0 to 3.5 cm on the left-hand side of pages;
- the main text should be in at least 1.5 line spacing (taken to mean a distance of about 0.33 inch or 8 mm between successive lines of text), but indented quotations and footnotes may be in single spacing;
- the text must be of an adequate size, definition and standard of legibility;
- the pages of the thesis must be numbered consecutively from beginning to end and should include any appendices and the bibliography.

3.6.5   Submitting

MSc students must submit an electronic copy of their thesis via the Assignment Submission Inspera site on the 1st day of August (or the nearest working day thereafter).

3.6.6   Viva voce

MSc students are not expected to undergo a viva unless their results are borderline. An MSc student may need to be available to return to Oxford in late August or early September in the event of being called back for viva voce.

3.6.7   Resubmitting your thesis

If a student fails their thesis they must resubmit. Students will need to complete another examination form which will be sent by the college to complete and must be completed by the stated entry date. The resubmission deadlines will be the following August (i.e., 1 year after submitting original thesis) and the Examination Schools will confirm the exact date nearer the time. For further information please refer to the Examination Schools website at https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams/examination-entry.

3.7   Notification of results of MSc

The *MSc in Social Data Science* is formally examined by the Board of Examiners in the OII. Students are examined on the basis of written examination, coursework and thesis. The Examiners for the MSc will normally complete their examination and release their marks by the end of September.

3.8   MSc thesis prize

There is one thesis prize each year which is awarded to the student with the highest thesis mark. The winner will receive a sum currently set at £200. The prize will be decided at the final Board of Examiners meeting in September based on nominations from thesis assessors. At its discretion, the Board may also recognise other theses which did not win the prize, but nevertheless were notable for exceeding the usual standard with an award of "Highly Commended".

Students awarded the thesis prize or recognised for producing a highly commended thesis will be publicised on the OII website and encouraged to note this achievement on their curriculum vitae. Each year a hard bound copy of the winning thesis will be added to the OII Library, where their work will be preserved and made available for future generations of scholars.

3.9   Digital copies of MSc theses

Students who are awarded a Distinction mark for their thesis may be invited to submit a digital copy for the OII Digital Thesis Library on Canvas, where it will be accessible to future MSc cohorts. In such cases, the MSc Programmes Coordinator will contact those students directly following the release of thesis and final classification results in September.

3.10 Conferral of degree

The arrangements for the conferral of the students' degree are made through their college. Degrees are conferred at the Sheldonian Theatre and a list of dates is available at http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/graduation/ceremonies.

4 Supervision

4.1 Overview of Supervision

They will begin with a general supervisor at the start of Michaelmas Term and then move to a thesis-specific supervisor at the end of Hilary Term. The supervisor guides the student through their course of study. The supervisor reports on the student's progress to the Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) at the end of each term and will also provide feedback to the student.

The advice of the supervisor will always be sought by GSC before recommending any change in status, transfer between courses, and so on.

Graduate students will also all have a College Adviser. The role of the College Adviser is to provide pastoral and general academic advice. They can be particularly helpful if the student has any academic or other difficulties that they do not feel able to discuss with the Faculty Supervisor.

If you have any issues with teaching or supervision, please raise these as soon as possible so that they can be addressed promptly. Details of who to contact are provided in Section 5.2 on complaints and appeals.

4.1.1 Role of supervisors

During your studies you will be supported in your first term by a general supervisor, and from Hilary term onwards by your thesis supervisor.

General supervisor

The general supervisor will be the main source of information and advice throughout the first term of study. Their responsibilities include:

- Assist in choice of option papers
- Meet with the student 1 or 2 times in Michaelmas.
- Write a termly report on the student's progress in Michaelmas term.

Thesis supervisor

Students will normally meet with their thesis supervisor 8 to 10 times from Hilary through to thesis submission. The majority of these meetings may happen Trinity Term and the summer vacation, once the student has obtained ethical approval and can commence primary research.

The responsibilities of thesis supervisors include:

- Help in the development of the thesis topic
- Holding regular meetings with the student to discuss progress of thesis
- Advise on data collection, methods and the research ethics approval application process (CUREC)
- Write the termly reports on the student's progress in Hilary and Trinity terms
- Comment in a timely manner on materials submitted
- In particular, comment on one complete draft of the thesis in good time for students to respond before final submission

This last obviously depends on supervisors' availability in Oxford during the summer vacation months, and on students' timely submission of drafts. Best practice is for students to submit a complete draft one month before the final deadline, allowing a response to students at least ten days before the deadline for submission. Supervisors should provide a reasonable level of availability during the summer; it is the student's responsibility to arrange dates for submission of work to supervisors – but it would be helpful if supervisors could warn students of any extended period of unavailability during the month before the thesis submission date.

4.1.2 Contact with supervisors

The tradition of graduate work at Oxford is one of individual supervision of each student, combined with small seminars and classes.

Once your supervisor has been assigned it is your responsibility to make first contact, typically via email. Thereafter, it would be a great help to your supervisors if you would contact them at or before the beginning of each term. It is essential for you to keep in regular contact with your supervisors, and ensure that your supervisors have information on your availability.

A number of students and supervisors have found that a practical and convenient method of maintaining an agreed record of meetings is for the student, as a matter of course, to send the supervisor a short email summarising the content of the meeting and the agreed outcomes.

4.1.3   Responsibilities of supervisees

In order to make the most effective use of the academic support provided, the student should endeavour to develop an appropriate working pattern, including beneficial and professional relationships with their supervisor and academic advisor. To facilitate this, the student should:

- discuss with their supervisor the type of guidance and comment which they find most helpful, and agree a schedule of meetings.
- be aware of their joint responsibility with the supervisor to ensure that regular and frequent contact is maintained, and to be encouraged to take the initiative to maintain contact when necessary.
- recognise the demands made on the supervisor's time and the need to prepare adequately for meetings and to observe deadlines.

In working with supervisors or other academic staff, students should also:

- accept the importance of constructive criticism within the academic support relationship, and seek a full assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of any work
- give full weight to any suggested guidance and corrective action proposed by the supervisor in the event of problems in the thesis
- seek to identify those skills which may help to contribute to the completion of the course, possibly including: subject specific skills, general study skills at postgraduate level, or general or transferrable skills.

4.1.4   Change of supervisor

Incompatibility

The Department and all University supervisors recognise that occasionally a student may feel there are good grounds for contemplating a change in supervisor. In these cases, this should first be discussed with the supervisor concerned, or if this seems difficult, with the MSc Course Director, the Director of Graduate Studies, the Graduate Studies Manager, or the MSc Programmes Co-ordinator. If this involves concerns over the quality of supervision, students are still encouraged to approach the department in order to resolve the matter informally where possible, but should also be aware of the University's formal complaint procedures. The procedures adopted by the Proctors for the formal consideration of complaints and appeals are described in the University Student Handbook (Proctors and Assessor's Memorandum) and the relevant Council regulations.

Periods of absence

If a supervisor is to be on leave and away from Oxford, or is leaving Oxford permanently, they are expected to make clear arrangements through the Graduate Studies Committee to cover the period of absence. This may involve continuing to supervise some students and transferring the supervision of others.

Appointment of a second supervisor

It is recognised that students may develop new interests or change focus over their time at the OII. Where a student finds that a faculty member other than their supervisor would help their dissertation research progress subsequent to thesis supervisor allocation in Hilary Term, there are two possibilities open to the student.

The student, with agreement of the potential additional supervisor and their existing supervisor, can request the addition of a second Thesis Supervisor. Students should submit their request to the MSc Programmes Coordinator by email, CCing their potential second supervisor. The request will be reviewed by the OII Graduate Studies Committee. Normally all such requests will need to be made by Week 4 of Trinity Term so there is time for the co-

supervision to be effective. If approved, the student and the two supervisors will be responsible for discussing the best co-supervision arrangements.

Additionally, students can always request meetings with any member of the faculty. The faculty are very open to informally supporting students for whom they are not the official supervisor, and students are encouraged to take advantage of this by approaching faculty members who can help advance their research. This can take place at any time, and requires no formal permission or arrangements.

4.2   Supervision reports

At the end of each term your supervisor submits a report on the online Graduate Supervision Reporting (GSR) system. These reports give a full account of your academic progress during the term and indicate the nature and extent of their contact with you.

It is important to note that Graduate Supervision Reports do not form part of summative assessment, and students are not graded on their academic progress reports. Rather, these reports are a means for supervisors to provide feedback on students' progress, for identifying areas where further work is required, for reviewing progress against an agreed timetable, and for agreeing plans for the term ahead. Copies of the supervisor's report are available to you, your college and to the Graduate Studies Committee where any problems are discussed and followed up.

Within this system, students also have the opportunity to contribute self-assessment reports and flag any of their concerns, which is **strongly recommended** to complete on a termly basis. For more information on the Graduate Supervision Reporting (GSR) please refer to Appendix C.

4.3   Skills training

Students should discuss their skills training needs with their thesis supervisor, whether software, academic writing, research methods training, etc.

All OII MSc students have access to a wide range of training resources, including:

1. Research methods training within the structure of the degree, via core and optional courses
2. Supplementary academic skills training, delivered through optional academic support sessions in Michaelmas, and the dedicated thesis seminar which runs in Trinity Term.
3. Optional further training provided by the University such as the Careers Service, IT Services, the Language Centre, and the Bodleian Library.

Some useful links to University training resources are given below:

- Postgraduate study skills guidance
- IT Learning Programme
- Bodleian Library workshops
- Careers Service events programme
- Research Integrity Online Course
- Centre for Learning and Teaching
- Language Centre
- Lecture Lists
- Oxford Talks

5   Applying for the DPhil programme

Students wishing to apply for the *DPhil in Social Data Science* or the *DPhil in Information, Communication, and the Social Sciences* with no break in study can do so by applying for readmission. When accessing the online application system, students should make sure that they choose the **readmission** application form instead of the standard application form. **Readmission** applicants do not have to pay the application fee. To this effect, students will need to enter a unique **code** which, if they are eligible, can be found in their Student Self Service account.

The readmission form must be submitted together with the following supporting materials:

- transcript(s) of previous higher education;
- three academic references (one of which must be written by an OII faculty member);
- research proposal;
- one sample of written work.

For guidance on supporting materials please refer to the Notes of Guidance for Applicants to Graduate Study http://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/applying-to-oxford/continuing-oxford-graduates.

Students should ensure that their re-admission form and all supporting materials, including references, are submitted to the Graduate Admissions Office in time to meet the application deadline(s). Please refer to the Graduate Admissions website for OII application deadlines.

If a student does take any break in study (even if only for a term), then they will not be able to use a readmission form and will need to submit an application form for graduate study, and pay the application fee.

Students who have successfully completed the *MSc in Social Data Science* degree who then go straight onto the *DPhil in Social Data Science* degree will normally be exempt from the DPhil core courses (Data and Society I and II, and Applied Analytical Statistics subject to the approval of the Director of Graduate Studies.

6 Feedback, Concerns and Queries

6.1 Feedback from students

6.1.1 Student representation

Student course representatives are a key link between the students within your cohort to the academic staff at the OII. They seek out students' views and represent you at meetings, working in partnership with staff to improve your course, campaign for change, and resolve any course-related issues which may arise. Course representatives work closely with the Divisional Board Reps, Oxford Student's Union, and its elected officers (both full and part-time) to improve student experience across the university.

Students elect two representatives from the Social Data Science MSc cohort by the start of Michaelmas term. These elected student reps sit on the following committees:

- Graduate Joint Consultative Committee
- Graduate Studies Committee

The Graduate Joint Consultative Committee (GJCC) is a staff-student committee designed to enhance opportunities for feedback and participation amongst both MSc and DPhil students (see **Appendix A: Graduate Joint Consultative Committee** for further details). The Graduate Studies Committee membership is responsible for the oversight and evaluation of all courses and provision for graduates, as well as the admissions process, and the implementation of teaching policy. Departmental Committee is for general departmental business and updates.

The Chair of the GJCC will normally be a DPhil student representative and will also serve on the Graduate Studies Committee at the OII. It is normally expected that the Chair will be a student who has served on the GJCC for at least one year previously, although the committee can decide to waive this in exceptional circumstances. The Chair of the Graduate Studies Committee is the Director of Graduate Studies.

Many of the OII's other committees also have student members to ensure full representation and involvement in decision-making. Membership is usually for one academic year, although previous committee members can reapply. These positions are advertised openly to all students in Michaelmas term each year:

- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee
- IT Committee
- Research Committee
- Safety Advisory and Buildings Committee

Details on course representatives and student committee members will be added to Canvas in Michaelmas Term.

Please see Appendices A and B for descriptions of the Graduate Joint Consultative Committee, Graduate Studies Committee and Research Committee responsibilities and membership.

At divisional level, there is a PGR Discussion Forum, made up of student representatives from each department/faculty of the division. Issues raised by this body are reported to the division's Graduate Studies Committee.

Student representatives sitting on the Divisional Board are selected through a process organised by the Oxford Student Union (Oxford SU). Details can be found on the Oxford SU website along with information about student representation at the University level. Please also see the Policy and Guidance on student engagement and representation for full information on the role and responsibilities of student representatives.

6.1.2 Opportunities to provide evaluation and feedback

The OII analyses any feedback received from any University wide surveys via the Graduate Studies Committee.

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 various mechanisms including the national Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) surveys. Previous results can be viewed by students, staff and the general public at the Oxford Student Survey pages.

The OII also asks all MSc students to complete internal teaching evaluation forms at the end of each term, which request anonymous feedback and comment on the academic aspects of each course. These results are shared with the course convenor, the programme director and other members of the department's leadership. The aggregated results are analysed and discussed at the Graduate Studies Committee in Hilary and Trinity.

In addition, students are asked to complete a Student Experience Survey at the end of Trinity Term, providing feedback on more general aspects of the student and learning experience throughout the year.

6.2 Complaints and academic appeals

The University, the Social Sciences Division and the OII 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). However, we recognise that occasionally things can go wrong and the University has procedures in place to support students in raising concerns.

General areas of concern about provision affecting students as a whole should be raised through by speaking to the relevant programme director or the Director of Graduate Studies, or reported to the student reps to be raised in the Graduate Joint Consultative Committee.

For individual concerns or complaints about any academic, administrative or support provision, as a first step the OII encourages students to raise this with a member of departmental staff who has responsibility for the area in question, if it feels appropriate to do so. This could be someone on the administrative side, for example the DPhil Coordinator, the Graduate Studies Manager or the Head of IT; or a member of academic staff such as your supervisor, programme director or the DGS.

As a department we strive to be open to hearing student feedback both positive and negative, supporting students through difficult circumstances, and taking action to achieve a satisfactory resolution wherever possible.

The University has three main procedures for formal complaints raised by students:

- Complaints about university services including teaching and supervision - handled by the Proctors under the Complaints Procedure
- Academic appeals against assessment outcomes and Exam Board decisions – handled by the Proctors under the Academic Appeals Procedure
- Complaints about behaviour of others under the Harassment Policy and Procedure:
  - If relating to a member of staff, this is handled by the Head of Department and University Director of HR under the Staff Harassment Procedure
  - If relating to another student, this is handled by the Proctors under the Student Harassment Procedure

The next sections provide further details of the three types of complaints listed above.

6.2.1 Complaints about university services and academic matters

Informal options for raising your concern

If your concern relates to teaching or other provision made by the department, wherever possible we encourage students to raise it directly with the course provider or staff member responsible.

In the case of concerns about how an individual is providing a service, such as teaching a class or giving supervision, an informal discussion with the person immediately responsible for the issue is often the simplest way to achieve a satisfactory resolution. Staff and faculty should expect to receive constructive feedback on the services they provide, and are expected to respond professionally to such feedback.

You may also raise such concerns with the Director of Graduate Studies or your Programme Director. Complaints about departmental facilities should be made to the Graduate Studies Manager (Christine Bunyan). If you feel unable to approach one of those individuals, you may contact the Head of Department (Prof Vicki Nash). The officer concerned will attempt to resolve the issue informally. The more information you can give about the problem, the easier it will be to deal with.

Formal complaints about academic matters

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of the informal route, you may take your concern further by making a formal complaint to the Proctors under the [University Student Complaints Procedure](#). To do so, you should [submit a complaint to the Proctors' Office](#) using the appropriate form. This should normally be done as soon as possible and in any event within 3 months of when the matters you are complaining about occurred.

You may contact a caseworker in the Proctors' Office to discuss (in confidence and without committing yourself to any action) before the formal complaints procedure is followed. You can also seek advice from your college tutor, college advisor or Senior Tutor.

Many other sources of advice are available from colleges, faculties/departments, and bodies like the Counselling Service or the Oxford SU 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. Many students have had felt well supported in particular by Student Welfare and Support Services.

6.2.2   Academic appeals about examinations and assessments

You may first discuss any concern about the outcome of a taught-course examination with the programme coordinator, course convenor, programme director, supervisor, or the Director of Graduate Studies. Queries and appeals must not be raised directly with the examiners.

If, following such a discussion, you have a concern about procedures not being correctly followed during an examination or assessment or you have reason to believe that your assessment or examination was not conducted fairly, you may make an academic appeal to the Proctors under the [academic appeals procedure](#) (see [guidance for students](#)).

You may contact a caseworker in the Proctors' Office to discuss your options (in confidence and without committing yourself to any action) before the formal appeals procedure is followed, via your Senior Tutor. You should also usually submit your appeal to the Proctors via your Senior Tutor. If you are a research degree student, you may submit your academic appeal directly to the Proctors' Office.

Please note that academic appeals should be submitted on the appropriate form as soon as possible and at the latest within 20 days of the date when you were notified of the relevant academic decision (i.e., your examination results, including research degree outcomes).

The Proctors will only consider appeals on the basis of procedural irregularities, not appeals against examiners' academic judgement. The Proctors will only authorise the re-checking of marks if there is evidence of an irregularity having occurred or if some other sufficiently serious justification is in play. Papers will be re-marked only if investigation by the Proctors has found a serious problem in the original examination process.

6.2.3   Complaints about staff or student behaviour

All members of the University are expected to treat each other fairly and with respect, courtesy and consideration. Harassment or victimisation is regarded as unacceptable behaviour and is not tolerated in any form. Harassing behaviours can take a variety of forms as defined in the University Harassment Policy. This covers behaviour on University or college premises, or in the course of University activity within or outside Oxford whether academic, sporting, social, cultural, or other.

There are formal and informal routes for raising concerns or making a complaint about staff or student conduct, which are detailed further in section 7 of this handbook (Bullying and harassment).

Before taking informal action, the student could discuss the situation with a Harassment Advisor, or in the case of sexual behaviour, with a Specialist Advisor at the Sexual Harassment and Violence Support Service. A Harassment Advisor can listen to students who believe they are being harassed, to clarify the options open to them and to assist them in resolving the matter informally where possible.

The OII has three trained Harassment Advisors who are part of the University's confidential harassment advisor network:

Karen Mead (lead advisor)   karen.mead@oii.ox.ac.uk

Prof Kathryn Eccles   kathryn.eccles@oii.ox.ac.uk

Prof Sandra Wachter   sandra.wachter@oii.ox.ac.uk

Further details on the role of the harassment advisor can be found on the Harassment Advisor Network page.

7   Welfare and Support

7.1   Sources of advice, help and counselling

If a student has concerns, academic or administrative, they have several possible courses of action open to them.

For academic issues:

- Within the OII students can consult their supervisor, the MSc Programme Director, or the Director of Graduate Studies, who will if necessary, consult the appropriate authorities on the student's behalf.
- At the student's College they can consult the Senior Tutor, the Tutor for Graduates or their own College Advisor, who will give similar help.
- Students can also consult the OII's Graduate Studies Manager, or the MSc Programme Coordinator, who can advise on administrative, academic and welfare matters.

For wellbeing support:

- The University Counselling Service (which acts strictly in confidence) is experienced not only in general psychological problems but also in the special problems and blocks associated with academic work. For appointment booking and enquiries, please email counselling@admin.ox.ac.uk.
- Every college has a welfare team, which provides support to students including signposting you to specialist services when necessary. You will be introduced to your college welfare team as part of your induction when you start your course.
- Every department also has at least one Welfare Contact, who acts as a first point of contact for students with welfare concerns, offering a listening ear and signposting to other sources of informal and professional support as appropriate. The OII's Welfare Contacts are Laura Maynard (laura.maynard@oii.ox.ac.uk) and David Pepper (david.pepper@oii.ox.ac.uk).
- In the UK, primary healthcare (including mental health) is accessed via your doctor (also known as a General Practitioner or GP), who can refer you to specialist services where necessary. Your college will have a recommended National Health Service (NHS) doctor and many also have a nurse on site. Should you have a long-term health condition, it is possible for your college doctor to liaise with other health practitioners who know you and your medical history well.
- Nightline is a confidential listening and information service run for students by students and is open from 8pm until 8am from 0th week to 9th week each term. Students can contact via phone 01865 270270 or instant message.

For community and peer support:

- A range of services led by students are available to help provide support to other students, including the peer supporter network and the Oxford SU's Student Advice Service.
- Oxford SU runs a series of campaigns to raise awareness and promote causes that matter to students.
- There are also a wide range of student clubs and societies to get involved in.

Details of the wide range of sources of support are available more widely in the University are available from the Oxford Students Welfare pages, including in relation to mental and physical health and disability.

7.2   Disability Advisory Service

The University operates a Disability Advisory Service which provides information and advice to students with impairments, health conditions, specific learning disabilities, and any other physical or mental difficulties. The Oxford Internet Institute works closely with this service to support students who require additional support or accommodation in their coursework, examinations, assessments, and interactions with the faculty and their peers at the OII.

If you have a disability and may require additional support during your studies, you are encouraged to let the department know at the earliest opportunity so that appropriate support arrangements can be made wherever

reasonably possible. Information about your health will be treated in confidence and only divulged on a need-to-know basis with your consent.

Students who require support of this nature are also advised to register with the Disability Advisory Service as soon as possible during the academic year, or when a new situation arises, for advice and support. The Service will liaise with the OII to provide you the support you need.

The OII supports the University's *Common Framework for Supporting Disabled Students*. Chrissy Bunyan is the OII's disability lead, who is available to discuss any related issues and to assist with connecting the student with appropriate support.

7.3   Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

"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."

University of Oxford **Equality Policy**

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. Please see the sections below for further information about EDI work at the University, divisional and departmental levels and how OII students can get involved.

7.3.1   The Equality and Diversity Unit

The Equality and Diversity Unit (EDU) works with all parts of the collegiate University to develop and promote an understanding of equality, diversity and inclusion, and ensure that this is reflected in all University processes.

 The EDU 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 disability, gender, race, sexual orientation, age, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity and religion and/or belief. The EDU website contains further information about the University's equality work around each of these thematic areas, together with information about resources to support individuals from different backgrounds.

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 further details or advice, visit the EDU website at edu.web.ox.ac.uk or contact: equality@admin.ox.ac.uk.

7.3.2   The Oxford Students' Union

Oxford SU is the representative body for all University of Oxford students and is involved in various projects that relate to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. Please see the Student Union website to find more about how to get involved with the SU's work.

7.3.3   EDI at the Social Sciences Division

The Social Sciences Division is committed to increasing the diversity of the people, scholarship and teaching across the division, and ensuring that each member is, and feels, valued, listened to and respected, able to be themselves, and to participate fully in the life of the Division.

Departments across the Division are taking steps to tackle racism, advance equality, and create a more inclusive and equitable culture. The Divisional EDI Panel meets twice termly to coordinate these efforts and advance proposals to the central University (Equality and Diversity Panel and other governing bodies as appropriate.

The Action Plan outlines steps being taken by the Division to advance change, including work by the Division's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Panel. More information about the Division's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion work can be found on the Social Sciences website.

7.3.4 EDI at the OII

The Oxford Internet Institute is committed to enhancing diversity and promoting equality of opportunity amongst all our staff and students. The OII seeks to maintain a positive and supportive working environment for its members and takes the well-being of all seriously.

The OII's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) committee is an internal group that considers and advises on how the department should support a working culture in which equality and diversity is embraced, and where appropriate focus is given to identifying, implementing and monitoring effective actions on diversity matters. The Committee's Terms of Reference are:

- To monitor and promote, and make policy proposals relating to, equality, diversity and inclusion in the OII;
- To advise the Director and other Senior Executive Team members on equality, diversity and inclusion as regards the matters for which they are responsible;
- To support the department in providing an inclusive environment in which the rights and dignity of all its staff and students are respected;
- To provide a forum for discussion of equality and diversity issues raised by staff and students in a transparent manner;
- To consider and share best practice from the department, University, and the wider higher education community;
- To fulfil the role of Self-Assessment Team for Athena SWAN;
- To monitor and progress the Department's Athena SWAN action plan and develop future submissions;
- To actively promote the Athena SWAN Charter within the department through activities and events to foster equality, diversity and inclusion;
- To promote effective equality impact assessment of new departmental policies;
- To promote and support a well-balanced working and study environment for all staff and students;
- To monitor career support and mentoring for staff in the department;
- To liaise with and consult the University Equality and Diversity Unit as required.

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee meets no less than once per term, normally in Week 7. Meetings are open, meaning all students and staff members are welcome to attend. Meeting papers and minutes of previous meetings will be made available on the OII Intranet.

For any queries or comments about the work of the OII's EDI Committee, please email edi@oii.ox.ac.uk.

7.4 OII Values and Code of Conduct

The Oxford Internet Institute has a Professional Code of Conduct and a Values and Behaviours Framework which are designed to help all students and staff make the most of working and studying at the OII.

These documents set out our expectations of OII members in their behaviour and conduct in what is first and foremost a place of work and study, and describe the resources and support available to help you to make the most of your experience in the department.

7.5 Bullying and harassment

The University recognises that experiencing or witnessing harassment or sexual misconduct can have a significant impact, whether a student has been directly affected, witnessed something happen, or has been named in a report.

Many experiences of harassment can be difficult for victims and survivors to process or articulate. Likewise, reporting incidents can prove a challenging and distressing process. At all points, whether or not you choose to report your experience, please prioritise your wellbeing by seeking support, factoring in your mental health and emotional resources, and knowing your options. Support is available to students regardless of whether the incident(s) occurred within the collegiate University or elsewhere.

For full information about the University's approach to preventing and responding to harassment and the support available for students, please see the [University's Single Comprehensive Source of Information](#), published in line with the Office for Students Condition of Registration E6.

7.5.1   Support within the University

Student Welfare and Support Services
The University has a range of welfare services that may be of help to you. You can contact the Director of the Student Welfare and Support Services' Office who can advise you about selecting the most appropriate form of support. The Director can be emailed at this address: [director.swss@admin.ox.ac.uk.](mailto:director.swss@admin.ox.ac.uk)

Sexual Harassment and Violence Support Service (SHVSS)
The Sexual Harassment and Violence Support Service is a service that provides professional support to students who have experienced sexual harassment and/or sexual violence, along with a safe place to be heard independent of your college or department. It works with all students whether the experience of sexual harassment or violence happened in Oxford or elsewhere, and whether it was recent or in the past.

Its advisors are specially trained in responding to incidents of sexual harassment and violence, including domestic abuse. All specialist advisors at the service are trained to support survivors at their own pace, free of charge and in confidence. Current students looking to speak to one of our advisors can email: supportservice@admin.ox.ac.uk. More information is available on the [SHVSS website](#).

At the OII
At the OII, you can contact a range of people about issues relating to bullying and harassment. These include the Graduate Studies Support Team, your Programme Directors, your Director of Graduate Studies, and the OII's Harassment Advisors.

The OII currently has 3 trained **Harassment Advisors** who are part of the University's confidential harassment advisor network. An up-to-date list of the OII advisors can always be found on the [OII Intranet](#). Further details on the role of the harassment advisor can be found on the [Harassment Advisor Network webpage](#).

If you do not feel comfortable contacting a local advisor in your college or department, you can contact the Harassment Line for details of another advisor.

At College
Help and advice is available from your college Dean, tutor, senior tutor, academic administrator, Middle Common Room or Student Union representative. All colleges also have a dedicated welfare contact. Your college may also have a published complaints procedure, which is usually found in your college handbook.

Harassment Advisory Service
Members of the University community who feel that they have been subject to harassment can contact the [Harassment Advisory Service](#), or their local harassment advisor for support. The Service is also available to those against whom an allegation of harassment has been made. To speak to one of the University advisors, please call 01865 270760 or email harassment.line@admin.ox.ac.uk.

Student Union Advice Service
Oxford SU Student Advice also provides a confidential and impartial listening and advice service for students. More information is available on the [Oxford SU website](#). Students looking to speak to an advisor from the Student Union can email this address: advice@oxfordsu.ox.ac.uk, or call one of the numbers given on the website.

Peer Support
[Student peer supporters](#) are available in colleges and departments to talk with students informally about any issues or problems they might be experiencing. At any one time there are around 350 peer supporters, who are carefully

selected and trained to take up this role, and receive ongoing support and supervision from the University Counselling Service. You can find a [full list of Peer Supporters](#) here.

Peers of Colour
Peers of Colour are Peer Supporters who identify as people of colour and attend 2 further supervisions per term to discuss supporting Oxford students of colour and to explore themes around race, identity, racism, inclusivity, belonging, society, Peer Support and the University. If you wish to speak to a Peer of Colour, then please email peersupport@admin.ox.ac.uk.

Rainbow Peers
Rainbow Peers are Peer Supporters who identify as LGBTQ+ and attend 2 further supervisions per term to discuss supporting Oxford LGBTQ+ students and explore themes around sexuality, sexual identity, prejudice, inclusivity, belonging, society, Peer Support and the University. If you wish to speak to a Rainbow Peer, then please email peersupport@admin.ox.ac.uk.

7.5.2   What to do if you hear about or witness bullying or harassment

We all have a role in keeping our community safe and creating a supportive, harassment-free culture. The current University Harassment Policy states that "*All members of the University community have a personal responsibility... [to support] any member of the University who feels they have been subject to harassment, including supporting them to make a formal complaint if appropriate*" ([University Harassment Policy](#), item 5.3).

How to intervene as a bystander

Bystander intervention is a vital component in tackling bullying and harassment. Through our everyday interactions we have the ability to challenge or reinforce social norms, and to lead by example and model considerate and respectful behaviour.

Broadly speaking there are four types of intervention an individual can take when they are a bystander to inappropriate behaviour or language: Direct, Distract, Delegate and Delay.   You may need to use more than one intervention, depending on the situation. For further information, please see the Equality and Diversity Unit's webpage on [Bystander Intervention](#).

How to support peers who have experienced bullying or harassment

Students are often likely to look to each other first for help in thinking through issues and for emotional support, but there are times when this can leave peers feeling overwhelmed, out of their depth and unsure how best to help, especially if the experiences described are particularly sensitive or traumatic.

When hearing about difficult situations, it may help to bear in mind the following:
- Be realistic about what you can offer: a listening ear, a friendly face, and help with reaching out to other support services, if appropriate.
- Remember your responsibility to look after yourself. You cannot effectively support others if you yourself are struggling; if you do not have the bandwidth to support someone, be upfront and try to direct them to other resources.
- Ensure that you also have support. Hearing about difficult situations can be emotionally challenging, it is important that you too have someone to confer with when needed, while also maintaining confidentiality.

What to do if you are worried about someone
- Encourage them to speak to their GP, to consult their college welfare team, and/or to make an appointment with the University's Counselling Service.
- For help with academic matters, encourage them to speak to their programme coordinator, programme director or supervisor.
- If you feel comfortable, you can offer to help them draft the email to the relevant party

- In a welfare emergency, where you consider that there is a significant risk of harm, please call 999. If you are not sure whether an urgent welfare situation is an emergency, please call the Counselling Service on 01865 270300 or call the Police non-emergency line 101.

General reminders
- Listen actively and compassionately
- Be sensitive of others' struggles
- Maintain confidentiality, except in an emergency
- Respect others' boundaries
- Encourage reaching out to university and professional support services when necessary
- Promote inclusivity, anti-racism and diversity awareness, including pointing out assumptions and unconscious bias, and avoiding stereotypes and microaggressions in your own responses

Further training and resources

The Oxford University SU runs a variety of training for students including:
- Sexual Consent workshops
- Queer Consent workshops
- Bystander Intervention training
- Sexual Violence training
- First Responder training.

For more information please visit their website: www.oxfordsu.org

8 Regulations and Policies

Examination Regulations are published in July each year covering the academic year from October to September. It can be obtained from colleges and is also available online at https://examregs.admin.ox.ac.uk/. Any amendments made during the academic year are published in the *University Gazette*. This handbook has been compiled using the latest Examination Regulations.

You should note that references in the regulations to the 'board' should be taken to refer to the OII's Graduate Studies Committee and references to the 'Secretary to the Faculties' should be construed as the Graduate Office.

The University's framework document for students undertaking postgraduate taught degrees which has been developed by the University's Education Committee is the Policy and Guidance on Postgraduate Taught Degrees.

8.1 Codes of Conduct and University Regulations

The University has a wide range of policies and regulations that apply to students. These are easily accessible through the A-Z of University regulations, codes of conduct and policies available on the Oxford Students website: https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/regulations.

Policies issued by the Education Committee

https://academic.admin.ox.ac.uk/a-z-policies-guidance

This contains up-to-date versions of the following:

• Policy and Guidance for Postgraduate Taught Degrees

• Learning and Teaching Strategy

• Examinations and Assessment Framework

Academic Integrity in Research

The Research Integrity and Practice page (https://researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/governance/integrity/) sets out the University's Code of Practice together with procedures in the case of suspected misconduct.

Proctors' Office

https://www.proctors.ox.ac.uk/

This contains information about complaints procedures and numerous other matters including student welfare and student support as well as student discipline. See especially:

Essential Information for Students https://www.proctors.ox.ac.uk/resources-for-students

Research Services

https://researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/

This contains several key documents, addressing interesting issues including plagiarism and outside consultancies.

• Academic Integrity in Research: Code of Conduct and Procedure

• Public Interest Disclosure: Code of Practice and Procedure

• Statement of Policy and Procedure on Conflict of Interest

Discipline

Infringements of the OII's and the University's codes of conduct may lead to disciplinary action. Student discipline is the responsibility of the Proctors' Office and full details are given at: https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/conduct. Sanctions include removal from the register of graduate students and fines.

8.2 Residence requirements

Full-time students are normally required by the University's regulations to be in residence in Oxford during term time. That means a commitment to be in Oxford for at least the full eight weeks of all three terms of the academic year. The dates of full term can be found at https://www.ox.ac.uk/about/facts-and-figures/dates-of-term and in the front of the Examination Regulations.

MSc students are potentially required to sit written examinations in Trinity term depending on what option papers are chosen. MSc students will need to submit their thesis by 1st August (or the nearest subsequent working day if this falls at the weekend) although this may be done remotely, but will also need to be available to return to Oxford in late August or September in the event of being called back for viva voce.

8.3 Suspension of status as a postgraduate student

Suspension of status as a postgraduate student enables students to suspend their studies without payment of fees if there is good reason for a student to do so (removal of graduate students from the Register is a different matter arising from academic or disciplinary offences).

Application

You may apply to the Graduate Studies Committee for suspension of status for a specified period. Any such application should be submitted using the Suspension of Status form on Student Self Service with details of the anticipated period required and with supporting comments from both the student's supervisor and college.

Fees

If the application is approved, the student will not be liable to pay fees during the period of suspension.

Period of suspension

MSc students must suspend for an entire year, and cannot suspend for one term, as research students can. When the student returns from suspension, they are to complete the GSO 17A Confirmation of Return from Suspension form.

Grounds for suspension

The Graduate Studies Committee is prepared to consider applications for suspension of status on the following grounds:

1.   Where a student is effectively prevented from pursuing their course of study in circumstances which are outside their control, yet there are good grounds for believing that the student will be able to resume work within a reasonable period, for example in cases of:

    a.   unforeseeable financial difficulty,

    b.   physical or mental incapacity, (including, maternity leave and unexpected domestic crises);

2.   Where it is desirable that a student should give up their work for a limited period, either:

    a.   in order to concentrate on some other project which cannot reasonably be deferred until their postgraduate work is completed (for example, in order to acquire some ancillary qualification); or

    b.   to take up temporary work which is likely to be relevant to their subsequent career and the opportunity for which is unlikely to recur.

3.   In the case of study abroad:

    a.   where a student holds a research studentship which is suspended during the period of study abroad because of the nature of the study; or

    b.   where a student's work is unduly delayed by difficulties in making arrangements for study, or in carrying out such study, in another country.

Notifying funders

If a student is funded by an external body or bodies, they must communicate with them about any planned or granted suspension of status, and must secure the funders' approval if required.

8.4   Disability

The OII supports the University's [Common Framework for Supporting Disabled Students](#).

For full information on University policy on matters relating to disabilities, see the [Disability Advisory Service](#) website.

8.5   University policy on student maternity, paternity and adoption leave

To support students seeking to take parental leave, the University's Student Maternity, Paternity, Adoption, and Shared Parental Leave Policy provides details of the arrangements for students who are about to have or adopt a child. The policy outlines how much leave students are entitled to, access to University facilities, graduate accommodation and childcare services and the provision for a flexible return to full-time study. Full details can be found in the [University's Student Maternity, Paternity, Adoption, and Shared Parental Leave Policy](#).

8.6   Equality

The University has a comprehensive [Equality Policy](#) which details the University's commitments advancement of equality through all its activities, and the expectations on all staff and students in helping to co-create an inclusive working, research and learning environment.

- University Policy and Procedures on Harassment: edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/university-policy-on-harassment
- Transgender Policy: edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/transgender-policy
- Staff Social Media Guidelines: hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/using-social-media
- Student Social Media Guidelines: www.ox.ac.uk/students/life/it/socialmedia
- Code of Practice on Meetings and Events: compliance.admin.ox.ac.uk/prevent/meetings-and-events

8.7   Health and safety

All Oxford Internet Institute employees, academic visitors, students and any other persons entering the OII building are responsible for exercising care in relation to themselves and others who may be affected by their actions. This includes responsibility to:

- Make sure that your work is carried out in the approved way and in accordance with best possible practice (please see the University's [guidance on work with Display Screen Equipment](#)).
- Obey all instructions from the Health & Safety Officer (Karen Mead) or the Head of Administration and Finance in respect of health and safety.
- Inform the Health & Safety Officer of any significant new hazards to be introduced, or newly identified risks found in existing procedures.
- Report all fires, incidents and accidents immediately to reception staff or to the Health & Safety Officer.
- Familiarise yourself with the location of firefighting equipment, alarm points and escape routes, together with the fire procedures.

Further details about health and safety including fire drills are given in the Buildings and Safety Induction and tours of OII premises during your first week.

8.8   OII Framework of Expectations for Inclusive Teaching

The OII has a [framework of expectations for Inclusive Teaching](#), which details the principles all convenors have agreed to adopt to support inclusive education, in relation to norms of communication, provision of teaching materials, reading lists and best practice in provision of recordings.

8.9   Educational Recordings Policy

The University's [Educational Recordings Policy](), valid from Michaelmas 2023, set out the University's policy in relation to the creation, access, distribution, use, reuse and repurposing of educational recordings provided on taught courses. It aims to support the responsible creation and use of recordings as an inclusive practice by providing clarity on a range of issues gathered through consultation with divisions.

The OII does not have a blanket policy on making lecture recordings available to all students, in light of the sensitivity of much subject matter covered and the discussion-based format of many sessions. The decision as to whether to make recordings available to all students as standard rests with each convenor.

If recordings are not available as standard, students who are registered with the Disability Advisory Service have permission to make their own recordings of presenter-led teaching sessions, if required as a reasonable adjustment. The OII provides students with recording equipment for this purpose.

The OII's framework of expectations for inclusive teaching describes other anticipatory approaches to disability support, in addition to recommendations for best practice.

8.10 AI in summative assessment

The University policy on [AI use in summative assessment](), updated in August 2025, sets out the expectations on AI use for those setting summative assessment and students undertaking summative assessment.

8.11 Data protection

The University of Oxford handles a large amount of personal data and works continuously to ensure its policies and processes are up-to-date. More information about the University's approach to data protection can be found in the [Policy on Data Protection](). Please see here for the OII's [Privacy Policy]().

9 The University

The organisation of Oxford University is complex and it may be helpful to outline some of the main institutions and their functions. The University's academic departments are divided among four divisional boards. The Oxford Internet Institute is a department within the Social Sciences Division.

The University is also collegiate and all graduate students belong both to a department and a college. Departments deal with lectures, examinations, and administration of graduate work, while colleges deal with undergraduate tutorial teaching and with the provision of various 'domestic' facilities. All graduate students must be admitted first by the University and then by a college.

The University deals with educational standards and the committee with primary responsibility for academic quality assurance, including in relation to graduate studies, is the Education Committee.

9.1 The OII as a department

9.1.1 Organisation

Details of the organisation of the department, contact information and photographs of OII personnel are available for both faculty and support staff at https://www.oii.ox.ac.uk/people/.

Some key people related to the MSc Programme include:

- OII Director: Professor Victoria Nash
- Director of Graduate Studies: Professor Bernie Hogan
- Programme Director of the MSc in Social Data Science: Dr Mohsen Mosleh
- Head of Administration and Finance: Joanna Barlow
- MSc Coordinator: David Pepper

- Graduate Studies Assistant: Jess Acton
- Welfare contacts: Laura Maynard and David Pepper
- Head of Graduate Studies Support: Christine Bunyan

9.1.2 Graduate Studies Committee

This is the main University administrative body so far as the management of graduate studies in your field is concerned. Please see Appendix B for full details of the Committee terms of reference.

The Committee is chaired by the Director of Graduate Studies who has broad overall responsibility for the graduate programmes. Details of the committee are listed in Appendix B.

The GSC normally meets twice a term in Weeks 3 and 7.

9.1.3 OII Facilities

The OII is currently located at the Stephen Schwarzman Centre for Humanities at the Oxford Radcliffe Observatory Quarter off Woodstock Road in Oxford. The department is split over the 2nd and 3rd floors, with the 2nd floor being home to the main entrance, teaching spaces and student workspaces.

There are two graduate study spaces within the OII area, one for DPhils and one for use of both MSc and DPhil students. In addition to this space, there is graduate workspace around the great hall and in the onsite library.

There are other several meeting spaces and seminar rooms within the OII space in the Schwarzman centre which are available for students to use but must be booked in advance. Full instructions on room booking and study spaces will be given in Induction Week. Any queries about OII facilities, including library facilities and study space, can be sent to facilities@oii.ox.ac.uk.

The Schwarzman Centre is fully accessible to all areas including accessible toilets and a changing places room. The OII has a common room, three seminar rooms, a meeting room and two one-to-one rooms.

MSc students will have card access to the OII space in the Schwarzman Centre, 7am-10pm, 7 days a week. MSc students can apply for 24-hour access to this space from the Building Operations team and must complete a lone working induction before this will be granted. For further information about buildings, health and safety, and how to apply for extended building access, please see the OII Facilities Intranet page.

9.2 The Colleges

The student's College is treated as their official address for all University correspondence. If a student is to be away from Oxford, it is important that the college and their supervisor are both informed. All colleges provide dining and common room facilities where students can meet people from other disciplines. All have a Tutor for Graduates (or some equivalent post) who can give general advice and guidance. In addition each graduate student is assigned to a College Adviser, who takes a general interest in the student's well-being and will normally be working in a cognate discipline.

There is considerable variety among the colleges. Eight (Green Templeton, Nuffield, St Anthony's, Kellogg, Linacre, Wolfson, St Cross and Reuben) take graduates only, while there are around thirty colleges that admit both graduates and undergraduates.

9.3 Library facilities

The library resources of Oxford are rich, but geographically scattered. Most Oxford libraries are part of the Bodleian Libraries.. The Search Oxford Libraries Online (SOLO) catalogue covers print and online holdings for almost all Oxford libraries, including the OII collection in the Schwarzman Library, as well as the Bodleian Libraries more broadly. Some important libraries for graduate work are mentioned here, but several others may be useful for specialised purposes.

9.3.1 The Schwarzman Library

This is mainly a Humanities library but also houses the OII's collection since our department is located within the Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities building. The OII collection includes many volumes on information and communication technologies, as well as OII faculty publications.

9.3.2 The Bodleian Social Science Library

The Social Science Library (SSL) is located in the Manor Road Building and has books for loan on Criminology, Economics, Politics and International Relations, International Development, Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work, and Socio-Legal Studies. It has an extensive run of periodicals not for loan. Around 10 million volumes of Bodleian Libraries material is housed offsite, and can be ordered to the Social Science Library. All library material, print and electronic, is listed on SOLO.

9.3.3 Bodleian Libraries

This is the main library service of the University. This is one of the UK's Legal Deposit libraries and in this role is entitled to request *inter alia* all works published or distributed in the UK. The Bodleian Libraries comprise 30 locations, including the Radcliffe Science Library, Bodleian Social Science Library and Law Library. To obtain access to the Bodleian Libraries it is necessary to have a University Card. It is not possible to borrow books received under Legal Deposit. Photocopying of material in the Bodleian Libraries is permitted, subject to copyright laws; detailed arrangements for photocopying vary.

9.4 Computing facilities

9.4.1 University facilities

Students will receive an Oxford University email address as soon as they have registered. The University's IT services have extensive computing facilities available:

- Online IT learning resources
- Access to free and discounted software
- repairs service for hardware.
- The **Advanced Research Computing** (**ARC**) service which provides access to High Performance Computing (HPC) resources, support, and advice to researchers within the University of Oxford.

From September 2025, the University now provides free ChatGPT Edu licenses to all staff and students through Oxford's collaboration with OpenAI. ChatGPT Edu offers enhanced privacy and security, and access to OpenAI's flagship GPT-5 model. The University also provides access to Microsoft Copilot Chat, Microsoft 365 Copilot licences, and Google Gemini and NotebookLM. For more information and resources, please see the Generative AI at Oxford page.

For full information on the facilities and services available at Oxford, please see the IT Services website.

9.4.2 OII IT facilities

The OII has its own IT support and web development team. They can be contacted at help@oii.ox.ac.uk and webhelp@oii.ox.ac.uk.

The following are also available to students if required:

- specialist software (e.g., visualization and design software) if already licensed to the OII or the University and agreed with the Head of IT
- external access to the OII server;
- loan of laptop or other ICT equipment (e.g. audio equipment for recording interviews) for work on OII research projects for a maximum of two weeks unless exceptional circumstances deem a longer period as agreed with the Head of IT.

For full details of the OII's computing facilities and support please see the OII intranet.

9.4.3 Canvas

The most up-to-date reading lists and course deadlines are held on the University of Oxford VLE called Canvas. Students can use their Single Sign-On to log in.

Each component of the degree (core and optional courses) has its own course page on Canvas, which is the hub for the course reading list, lecture slides and recordings, and communications from the course convenor and teaching assistants. Canvas is also used for submitting formative coursework, threaded discussion forums and other features such as polls. If you have any technical issues or queries on content such as reading lists, please contact the MSc Coordinator at msc@oii.ox.ac.uk.

9.5   Training facilities

Students have access to a wealth of free training resources, courses and workshops to support the development of study and research skills, including:

- Postgraduate level study skills guidance
- IT Learning Centre digital skills courses
- Bodleian Libraries iSkills workshops
- Careers Services workshops
- Centre for Teaching and Learning

9.6   The Language Centre

The Language Centre provides a wide range of services at 12 Woodstock Road which are available free of charge to students.

- Courses in English as a foreign language.
- Specialist courses in Academic Writing.
- Library, with adjacent audio and video study laboratory, containing self-instruction material in more than eighty languages.
- Regular courses in French, German, Modern Greek, Italian, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Welsh.

Details of language courses for the current year (which start on the Monday of first week of Michaelmas Term), and of the Centre's opening hours, library facilities, registration procedures etc., are available at the Language Centre and on their website.

Applications to register must be made by Wednesday of Week 1 of Michaelmas Term. If students think they need any such courses, they should not hesitate to apply for them.

9.7   Careers guidance

The University's Careers Service provides a comprehensive service for current Oxford students and alumni. They can offer you impartial advice on any careers-related topic – including deciding what to do, applying for jobs or further study, and how to develop your skills. Their specialist careers advisers have backgrounds in a wide range of sectors, and run a range of events, workshops and careers fairs each year, as well as offering 1:1 appointments.

10 Financial matters

10.1 OII MSc Student Research Budget

The MSc student research budget is available to all student to help towards research-related expenses. The maximum funding available is £400 per student for the duration of the degree. We recommend that you also explore funding through your college as most will operate a similar fund for graduate students. Approved types of expenditure under the OII student research budget include:

- Conference-related expenses (fees, travel, accommodation are fine but memberships cannot be covered)
- Software licenses (where not already available through Oxford)
- Compensation for interviews/participants or crowdsourced labour such as data tagging
- Researcher travel expenses to conduct interviews/carry out fieldwork
- Library resources (where not available as online resources through SOLO)

How to use the allowance

1. Please fill in the online application form

2. Finance and supervisors review application form (value for money etc.) and give approval.

3. If approval is given, Finance will send email to confirm this and provide instructions on how to claim reimbursement (normally by student buying the item and then completing university expenses claim).

Please be aware that the budget is not intended to be used for IT hardware or office equipment, and under University policy all durable items purchased with the research budget remain property of the University and must be returned to the department at the end of your studies. Further, the student research budget cannot cover anticipated study expenses such as travel to classes, laptop purchase or emergency funding for day-to-day living expenses. In case of financial hardship, an application should be submitted for hardship funding instead.

10.2 OII MSc Social Budget

The OII has an annual social budget of £1200 for MSc Social Data Science students for self-organised cohort-building activities (a nominal £400 per term, or one bigger event towards the end of the year). All spend must take place prior to 31 July 2026.

This budget can be used for lunches or other day-time socials to take place at the OII (note that this requires liaising with events@oii.ox.ac.uk and facilities@oii.ox.ac.uk on dates and risk assessment); evening events outside the OII like dinner or pub nights as long as these include food as well as drinks; or activities like city tours, crazy golf, bowling etc. Previous cohorts have also organised things like termly picnics, subsidised tickets for college dinners, and even networking trips/industry visits in London. The main requirement is that funding should be used for events which are open to the whole cohort.

How to use the allowance

In order to make use of the social budget, please discuss and agree upon a social activity as a cohort and then one or two nominated students should take responsibility for organising this activity. To obtain the funds, the student organisers should email details of the planned activity to Finance Officer Duncan Passey on finance@oii.ox.ac.uk and CC msc@oii.ox.ac.uk.

10.3 Disability Support Funding

Students who are registered with the Disability Advisory Service may be able to claim funding to help cover costs incurred as a result of their disability while at university. Please see the Disability Advisory Service funding pages for advice on how to apply for these schemes.

In the event that DAS funding cannot cover or can only partially cover costs, DAS-registered students can also submit a request to the **OII's Disability Support Fund**. This fund is designed to contribute towards costs incurred

for recommended adjustments that are detailed in a student's support plan, such as human support (note-taking, proof-reading), or specialist equipment and software.

How to apply

Students should send their application in writing to the Graduate Studies Manager Christine Bunyan (christine.bunyan@oii.ox.ac.uk). Applications should include (a) the nature of the expenses and (b) details of the contribution already sought from DAS and if applicable, college support funds.

10.4 Carers' Support Fund

This scheme has been established as part of our efforts to support equal access to professional development opportunities, recognising that staff and students with caring responsibilities may incur additional costs in order to attend events and training, including conferences, research visits, or work-related training activities and events that fall on evenings and weekends. Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis and we welcome feedback on any aspect of this scheme. Please contact hr@oii.ox.ac.uk with any queries.

How to apply

Fill out the online form on the OII Intranet: Carers' Support Fund

10.5 Grants, prizes and other funds

Financial help towards research expenses, when not available through the ESRC or other bodies financing your work, may be obtainable through various University funds. Details of University scholarships, prizes and trust funds are published each term in a supplement to the *University Gazette*. The main list is published annually around the start of Michaelmas Term.

Further details about University grants and funding can be found at: https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/fees-funding. There may also be various college funds and awards available and students should speak with the college adviser about such opportunities.

The University also has a number of prizes and awards available for academic achievement.

10.6 Paid work

For full-time students their first commitment must be their Oxford degree work, which is demanding and intensive. If they need, or wish, to undertake paid employment of any kind (whether inside or outside the University), they must first obtain the approval of their college, their OII supervisor and the Director of Graduate Studies. Full-time MSc students should note that the demands of the degree leave very little time during the week for any paid employment.

Please see the University Guidance on Paid Work for graduate students for full details. Overseas students should also check with the Student Immigration Service if they are eligible to work.

MSc students are not considered to be on vacation during any period when you are expected to study or be working on your thesis, even if this is outside term time. This includes Trinity Term up until the thesis submission deadline of the weekday on or nearest to the 1st of August.

Your college may have a number of small jobs available, some of which – such as library jobs and occasional portering duties – can comfortably be combined with study. Such employment would still need to be approved as detailed above.

For any queries about working during your studies, please speak to the MSc Coordinator, or the OII HR Manager (hrmanager@oii.ox.ac.uk).

10.7 Travel Insurance

The University offers free travel insurance to all students travelling for University business (e.g. for research purposes and fieldwork). The Travel Insurance Application and Travel Registration (TIRS) is the online portal for

submitting and processing travel insurance applications and registering travel details. Application details are held centrally, for use when processing claims. You are able to register their travel details even if you do not require University insurance. The University will use the information in the system to locate and contact travellers who are in areas impacted by an incident.

10.8 Assistance with financial difficulties

10.8.1 University and college funding

It is expected that students will secure the necessary funds to cover their fees and living costs before arriving at Oxford. However, the University and its colleges have a number of funds available to support students who find themselves in financial hardship while enrolled on their courses.

Students in financial difficulty should approach their college in the first instance. Colleges understand the financial constraints students experience and will be able to offer advice on the support that students may be eligible to apply for, including any relevant College Hardship Funds.

The University operates a centrally-administered Oxford Assistance Fund (OAF), which offers financial support through grants and/or loans for students experiencing unexpected financial difficulties. grants and/or loans of up to £8,000 are available, with applications assessed via the University Financial Assistance Committee on a termly basis. Please note that complete applications including supporting documentation should be submitted by week 3 of Michaelmas and Hilary term and by week 1 of Trinity term.

10.8.2 OII Hardship Fund

The OII operates a small fund to support students who experience financial hardship that could not have been anticipated at the start of their course.

The purpose of the fund is to provide support to students experiencing genuine and unforeseeable financial hardship. The fund is not intended to support discretionary or routine academic expenses such as conference or research travel, or book or equipment purchases.

Students are asked, where eligible, to apply to their college hardship fund and the University Hardship Fund before applying to the OII's Hardship Fund. However, students should not feel apprehensive about inquiring where hardship is imminent. For full guidance on eligibility and the assessment process, please see the OII Student Hardship Fund Guidelines.

How to apply

Students should send their application in writing to the Graduate Studies Manager, Christine Bunyan (christine.bunyan@oii.ox.ac.uk).

Applications should include:

 (a) a short statement of the circumstances,

(b) supporting evidence to establish the case for hardship, and

(c) confirmation that an application has already been made to the College and University hardship funds (or explain why not).

Appendix A: Graduate Joint Consultative Committee

1. The terms of reference of the Graduate Joint Consultative Committee of the Oxford Internet Institute are:
    1.1 To act as a two-way channel of communication between the department and its students on all aspects of their educational experience in the department.
    1.2 To refer matters raised through the representation system to the relevant department committee.
    1.3 To receive and comment on any changes planned by the department with respect to admissions, induction, teaching, and assessment as referred to them by any department committee.
    1.4 To comment on physical resources within or related to the department, for example but not limited to, computer facilities, laboratory provision, library provision, and online resources.
    1.5 To comment upon safety within the department.
    1.6 To receive and consider analyses of and department responses to: the outcomes of course evaluation mechanisms; national statistics such as the Student Barometer; student performance through summary statistics; and annual reports of the Chairs of boards of examiners and external examiners reports.
    1.7 To receive and consider reports from department reviews, course reviews and professional, statutory and regulatory bodies as is allowed by the terms of the relevant committees/bodies.
    1.8 To review on an annual basis the effectiveness of the student representation system in the department including identifying any changes to the system.
    1.9 To discuss follow-up action resulting from previous GJCC meetings, in particular any matter which was referred to other department committees
    1.10 To report to the OII's Graduate Studies Committee by submission of notes/summary of each meeting of the GJCC.
2. The membership of the Graduate Joint Consultative Committee shall be as follows:
    (a) Director of Graduate Studies,
    (b) MSc Programme Director (SSI),
    (c) MSc Programme Director (SDS),
    (d) DPhil Programme Director (ICSS),
    (e) DPhil Programme Director (SDS),
    (f) Head of Administration and Finance,
    (g) Graduate Studies Manager,
    (h) MSc Coordinator,
    (i) DPhil Coordinator,
    (j) Graduate Studies Assistant,
    (k) two representatives of full-time postgraduate research (DPhil in Information, Communication and the Social Sciences) students of the Institute in accordance with paragraph 3 below
    (l) two representatives of full-time postgraduate research (DPhil in Social Data Science) students of the Institute in accordance with paragraph 3 below
    (m) one representatives of part-time postgraduate research (DPhil) students of the Institute in accordance with paragraph 3 below
    (n) two representatives of full-time postgraduate taught (MSc Social Science of the Internet) students of the Institute in accordance with paragraph 3 below
    (o) two representatives of part-time postgraduate taught (MSc Social Science of the Internet) students of the Institute in accordance with paragraph 3 below
    (p) two representatives of full-time postgraduate taught (MSc Social Data Science) students of the Institute in accordance with paragraph 3 below
    (q) such other co-opted members as the committee shall determine
3. Students of the Institute shall elect representatives of their number to serve on the committee prior to the first committee meeting of each year.
4. The committee shall be chaired by one of the student members, to be elected by the committee at the first meeting of the year. If the student chair becomes unavailable (for instance, if they have completed or left the programme and a new chair has not yet been elected), the DGS will serve as interim chair only until such a time as a new chair can be elected.
5. The secretary to the committee will be the OII Graduate Studies Assistant. The secretary will take the notes from the meetings, and liaise with the chair to create the minutes of the meeting.

    The committee will normally meet at least three times a year, with meetings usually held once each term. The committee shall have leave to allow the chair to take action as appropriate between meetings.

Appendix B: Standing Committees

Graduate Studies Committee

Function:

The Graduate Studies Committee shall manage all business of the Board relating to postgraduate studies within the department.

Terms of reference:

The terms of reference of the Graduate Studies Committee of the department are:

1. To implement all aspects of teaching policy for the OII as agreed by the Steering Committee.
2. To decide on:
   1. applications for admission as a Probationer Research Student and transfer to the OII DPhil programme, and applications for admission to the OII's MSc programme,
   2. suspension or removal of OII students from the register of graduate students,
   3. applications for transfer and confirmation of status,
   4. the examiners' recommendation regarding the award of the degrees of Doctor of Philosophy and Master of Science, and,
   5. the award of scholarships.
3. To approve:
   1. nominations of assessors for transfer and confirmation of status of research students,
   2. nominations for the board of examiners for the OII's MSc programmes
4. To review and make recommendations for changes and updates to the following in the light of university guidance and feedback from teachers, examiners and students:
   1. induction materials,
   2. OII graduate studies handbook,
   3. student feedback questionnaires,
   4. MSc courses and DPhil programmes,
   5. teaching methods and examination and marking schemes.
5. To receive:
   1. supervisors' termly and annual progress reports on all research and MSc students at the OII,
   2. reports of examiners and external examiners,
   3. results of student feedback questionnaires,
   4. statistics of success rates and details of complaints and academic appeals lodged and ensure that appropriate action is taken in the light of them.
6. To consider and approve applications for Visiting Student status.

Membership

The membership of the Graduate Studies Committee shall be as follows:

1. Director of Graduate Studies (*Chair*) (*ex officio*),
2. Members of the department's staff who are engaged in teaching for the department,
3. Head of Administration and Finance (*ex officio*),
4. Director of IT and Web Services (*ex officio*),
5. Four representatives of postgraduate students of the department (one from each programme),
6. Such other co-opted members as the committee shall determine.

The Board will also endeavour to use its power of co-optation to ensure that there is gender representation on the Board proportionate to the profile of the permanent academic staff, if this has not been achieved through the elections.

Postgraduate students of the Department shall elect four of their number to serve on the committee. The student representatives shall not be entitled to take part in any reserved business except by leave of the chair.

Meetings

The Graduate Studies Committee will normally meet at least six times a year. The committee shall have leave to allow the Chair to take action as appropriate between meetings.

Research Committee

Terms of reference

The terms of reference of the Research Committee are:

1. To develop the department's research strategy and to discuss all relevant research issues with a view to promoting and co-ordinating those activities within the Institute, including:
    1. Research funding in the context of the Institute's overall finances,
    2. publication and dissemination of research findings,
    3. research related events, including the Bellwether series and OII colloquia,
    4. academic resources,
    5. research policy including ethical issues.
2. To consider and approve research funding proposals
3. To consider and approve proposals for Postdoctoral Fellowships, Associate status and Visitor status (other than Visiting Student status)

Membership

The membership of the Research Committee shall be as follows:

1. Director of Research (*Chair*) (*ex officio*),
2. Research and academic staff on departmentally funded contracts,
3. Head of Administration and Finance (*ex officio*),
4. IT Manager (*ex officio*),
5. three representatives from the department's contract research staff,
6. two representatives of the postgraduate students of the department.

The Board will also endeavour to use its power of co-optation to ensure that there is gender representation on the Board proportionate to the profile of the permanent academic staff, if this has not been achieved through the elections.

Postgraduate students of the Department may elect two of their number to attend meetings of the committee. The student representatives shall be entitled to contribute to discussion of any unreserved business described at paragraph (a) above but may not take part in any other business except by leave of the chair.

Apart from *ex officio* members, members shall serve for three years and be eligible for reappointment.

Meetings

The Research Committee will normally meet at least three times a year. The Committee shall have leave to allow the Chair to take action as appropriate between meetings.

Appendix C: Graduate Supervision Reporting (GSR)

At the end of each term, the student's supervisor(s) will submit a report on their academic progress. To facilitate this reporting, the University operates an online Graduate Supervision Reporting (GSR). Within this system, students have the opportunity to contribute to their termly supervision reports by reviewing and commenting on their own progress.

Students are **strongly recommended** to complete a self-assessment, taking the opportunity to review and comment on their academic progress, measure their progress against the requirements and agreed timetable for their programme of study, identify any skills training they have undertaken or may need to the future, and list their engagement with the academic community (e.g. seminar/conference attendance or any teaching they have undertaken).

The student's supervisor(s) will review and comment on their academic progress and performance during the current term and assess skills and training needs to be addressed during the next term. The supervisor should discuss the report with the student, as it will form the basis for feedback on their progress, for identifying areas where further work is required, for reviewing progress against an agreed timetable, and for agreeing plans for the term ahead.

When reporting on academic progress, students on taught courses should review progress during the current term, and measure this progress against the timetable and requirements for their programme of study.

All students should briefly describe which subject-specific research skills and more general personal/professional skills they have acquired or developed during the current term. Students should include attendance at relevant classes that form part of their programme of study and also include courses, seminars or workshops offered or arranged by the OII or the University. Students should also reflect on the skills required to undertake the work they intend to carry out. Students should mention any skills they do not already have or may wish to strengthen through undertaking training.

The MSc Programme Director and the Director of Graduate Studies have access to these reports, and will review them, watching in particularly for any issues flagged as a concern. If the student has any complaints about the supervision they are receiving, they should raise this directly with the Director of Graduate Studies at the OII. Students should not use the supervision reporting system as a mechanism for complaints.

Students are asked to report in weeks 7, 8 and 9 of term. Once the student has completed their sections of the online form, it will be released to their supervisor(s) for completion and will also be visible to the Director of Graduate Studies and to their College Advisor. When the supervisor's sections are completed, students will be able to view the report, as will the relevant Director of Graduate Studies and their College Advisor. Directors of Graduate Studies are responsible for ensuring that appropriate supervision takes place, and this is one of the mechanisms they use to obtain information about supervision. College Advisors are a source of support and advice to students, and it is therefore important that they are informed of the students' progress, including concerns (expressed by the student and/or their supervisor).

Access to GSR for students will be via [Student Self Service](). Students will be sent a GSR automated email notification with details of how to log in at the start of each reporting window, and who to contact with queries.

Appendix D: Term Schedules

The following tentative term schedules are provided for your guidance. Any changes in time or location will be available on Canvas and updated course reading lists, which should be understood as the definitive sources of this information.

Michaelmas Term

Time	Monday Weeks 1-4	Monday Weeks 5-8	Tuesday Weeks 1-8	Wednesday Weeks 1-4	Wednesday Weeks 5-8	Thursday Weeks 1-8	Friday Weeks 1-4	Friday Weeks 5-8
9:00 AM								
9:30 AM			Research Design for Social Data Science — Lecture				Hybrid (in-person and online) Academic support and and skills sessions	
10:00 AM						Group A Data and Society I TA Session		
10:30 AM								
11:00 AM						Group B Data and Society II TA Session		
11:30 AM								
12:00 PM			Research Design for Social Data Science — TA session					
12:30 PM								
1:00 PM								
1:30 PM								
2:00 PM	Fundamentals of Python for Social Data Science — Daily Briefing	Machine Learning — Daily Briefing	Data and Society I — Lecture	Fundamentals of Python for Social Data Science — Daily Briefing	Machine Learning — Daily Briefing		Fundamentals of Python for Social Data Science — Daily Briefing	Machine Learning — Daily Briefing
2:30 PM								
3:00 PM								
3:30 PM	Fundamentals of Python for Social Data Science — Tutorial	Machine Learning — Tutorial		Fundamentals of Python for Social Data Science — Tutorial	Machine Learning — Tutorial		Fundamentals of Python for Social Data Science — Tutorial	Machine Learning — Tutorial
4:00 PM								
4:30 PM								

Hilary Term (provisional)

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9:00 AM					
9:15 AM					Applied Analytical Statistics TA Session
9:30 AM		Data and Society II		Applied Machine Learning with LLMs	Applied Analytical Statistics TA Session
9:45 AM		Data and Society II		Applied Machine Learning with LLMs	Applied Analytical Statistics TA Session
10:00 AM		Data and Society II		Applied Machine Learning with LLMs	Applied Analytical Statistics TA Session
10:15 AM		Data and Society II		Applied Machine Learning with LLMs	Applied Analytical Statistics TA Session
10:30 AM		Data and Society II		Applied Machine Learning with LLMs	Applied Analytical Statistics TA Session
10:45 AM		Data and Society II		Applied Machine Learning with LLMs	
11:00 AM		Data and Society II		Applied Machine Learning with LLMs	Subversive Technologies
11:15 AM		Data and Society II		Applied Machine Learning with LLMs	Subversive Technologies
11:30 AM	Data-driven Network Science			Applied Machine Learning TA Session	Subversive Technologies
11:45 AM	Data-driven Network Science			Applied Machine Learning TA Session	Subversive Technologies
12:00 PM	Data-driven Network Science		Algorithmic Fairness TA Session	Applied Machine Learning TA Session	Subversive Technologies
12:15 PM	Data-driven Network Science		Algorithmic Fairness TA Session	Applied Machine Learning TA Session	Subversive Technologies
12:30 PM	Data-driven Network Science		Algorithmic Fairness TA Session	AI for Policymaking	Subversive Technologies
12:45 PM	Data-driven Network Science		Algorithmic Fairness TA Session	AI for Policymaking	Subversive Technologies
1:00 PM	Data-driven Network Science			AI for Policymaking	
1:15 PM	Data-driven Network Science			AI for Policymaking	
1:30 PM	Data-driven Network Science			AI for Policymaking	
1:45 PM	Data-driven Network Science			AI for Policymaking	
2:00 PM	Social Data Science in Practice	Applied Analytical Statistics		AI for Policymaking	Algorithmic Fairness and Accountability	Internet Economics
2:15 PM	Social Data Science in Practice	Applied Analytical Statistics		AI for Policymaking	Algorithmic Fairness and Accountability	Internet Economics
2:30 PM	Social Data Science in Practice	Applied Analytical Statistics			Algorithmic Fairness and Accountability	Internet Economics
2:45 PM	Social Data Science in Practice	Applied Analytical Statistics			Algorithmic Fairness and Accountability	Internet Economics
3:00 PM	Social Data Science in Practice	Applied Analytical Statistics			Algorithmic Fairness and Accountability	Internet Economics
3:15 PM	Social Data Science in Practice	Applied Analytical Statistics			Algorithmic Fairness and Accountability	Internet Economics
3:30 PM	Social Data Science in Practice	Applied Analytical Statistics			Algorithmic Fairness and Accountability	Internet Economics
3:45 PM	Social Data Science in Practice	Applied Analytical Statistics			Algorithmic Fairness and Accountability	Internet Economics
4:00 PM	Social Data Science in Practice TA Session					Internet Economics
4:15 PM	Social Data Science in Practice TA Session					Internet Economics
4:30 PM	Social Data Science in Practice TA Session					Internet Economics
4:45 PM	Social Data Science in Practice TA Session					Internet Economics

Trinity Term (provisional)

Time	Monday	Tuesday		Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9:00 AM						
9:30 AM						
10:00 AM						
10:30 AM		**SDS Thesis Writing Workshops** Weeks 1-2	**SDS Thesis Seminar** *Group A* Weeks 3-8			
11:00 AM						
11:30 AM						
12:00 PM						
12:30 PM						
1:00 PM			**SDS Thesis Seminar** *Group B* Weeks 3-8			
1:30 PM						
2:00 PM						
2:30 PM						
3:00 PM						
3:30 PM						
4:00 PM						
4:30 PM						
5:00 PM						

Appendix E: Examining Conventions Academic Year 2025-26

1.   Introduction

Examination conventions are the formal record of the specific assessment standards for the course or courses to which they apply. They set out how examined work will be marked and how the resulting marks will be used to arrive at a final result and classification of an award.
The supervisory body responsible for approving the examination conventions is the Social Sciences Board's Quality Assurance Committee.

All students should refer to the [Resources for Students](#) for further information on examination matters and plagiarism.

2.   Rubrics for individual papers

This is a one-year full-time taught course which is comprised of the following seven parts.

Research Design for Social Data Science
Examined through an assessed written submission consisting of one assignment of no more than 1,500 words to be submitted by 12.00 noon on Thursday of week 8 of Michaelmas Term and one assignment of no more than 1,500 words to be submitted by 12.00 noon on Thursday of week 0 of Hilary Term. Both essays are to be submitted electronically via the University approved online submission site. The specified word limits exclude the bibliography, but including footnotes and tables, following the same guidelines as provided for thesis word counts in the Social Data Science MSc Handbook.

Introduction to Data Science and Machine Learning
Examined through a written submission in the form of a short-duration, take-home paper consisting of a series of practical exercises and short-form essay questions that assesses understanding of taught content presented in Fundamentals of Social Data Science in Python and Machine Learning. The written materials, not to exceed 3,500 words, are due to be submitted electronically via the University approved online submissions site by 12.00 noon on Tuesday of week 10 of Michaelmas Term.

Data and Society
This class is taught over two terms and will be assessed through the Data and Society I paper in Michaelmas Term and Data and Society II paper in Hilary Term.

Data and Society I will be examined through an assessed written submission consisting of one 3,000-word essay (excluding the bibliography, but including footnotes and tables, following the same guidelines as provided for thesis word counts in the Social Data Science MSc Handbook). The written materials are due to be submitted electronically via the University approved online submissions site by 12.00 noon on Thursday of week 0 of Hilary Term.

Data and Society II will be examined through an assessed written submission consisting of one 3,000-word essay (excluding the bibliography, but including footnotes and tables, following the same guidelines as provided for thesis word counts in the Social Data Science MSc Handbook). The written materials are due to be submitted electronically via the University approved online submissions site by 12.00 noon on Thursday of week 10 of Trinity Term.

Applied Analytical Statistics
Examined through an assessed written submission consisting of one essay not to exceed 4,000 words in length (excluding the bibliography, but including footnotes and tables, following the same guidelines as provided for thesis word counts in the Social Data Science MSc Handbook). The essay is due to be submitted electronically via the University approved online submissions site by 12.00 noon on Thursday of week -1 of Trinity Term.

Two Option Papers

The options component of the degree (two 8-week options chosen from a list available in the Social Data Science MSc Handbook and on the OII website from the start of the academic year), or another paper agreed by the Director of Graduate Studies, will be assessed according to the assessment details for in the reading lists available for each course. These will be published on the OII website and in the Canvas learning environment by the end of week one of Michaelmas Term. In the case of written work, this will normally be by one essay or by a project and written report not exceeding 4,000 words (excluding the bibliography, but including footnotes and tables, following the same guidelines as provided for thesis word counts in the Social Data Science MSc Handbook) submitted via the University approved online submissions site by 12.00 noon on Thursday of week 0 in Trinity term. Unseen open book written examinations, usually three hours in length, will be held as indicated in the assessment details for each class and as scheduled by the Examination Schools.

Thesis

A thesis, not to exceed 12,000 words (excluding the bibliography, but including footnotes and tables, see the Social Data Science MSc Handbook for detailed guidance) must be submitted electronically via the University approved online submissions site by noon of the weekday on or nearest to the 1st of August of the year in which the degree is to be taken. This is a limit not a target and theses of between 9-12,000 words are normally acceptable. The topic of the thesis will be chosen by the student, subject to approval by the student's supervisor and the Chair of Examiners. The deadline for submitting the title and topic is by noon on Tuesday of Week 2 in Trinity Term. Any changes to the title or topic after this date require approval by the Chair of Examiners. All requests for changes must be submitted at least 3 weeks prior to the final submission deadline for the thesis, and requests after this will not normally be approved. Students who have been given approval by the Proctors for a different submission date have until 3 weeks prior to their approved submission date to request changes to their title and topic.

All students will be required to sign a statement asserting that any coursework submitted for summative assessment is their own.

3. Marking conventions

Marking conventions are in accordance with the guidelines published in the Graduate Studies Handbook for the MSc, which can be found on Canvas.

3.1 *University scale for standardised expression of agreed final marks*

Agreed final marks for individual papers will be expressed using the following scale:

70-100	Distinction
65-69	Merit
50-64	Pass
0-49	Fail

3.2 *Qualitative marking criteria for different types of assessment*

The marking scales below are used for all elements of the Masters Programme and are laid down by the Graduate Studies Committee of the Oxford Internet Institute. All marks from 0 to 100 can be given, with lower thresholds of 50 for a pass, 65 for a Merit, and 70 for a Distinction – see 'Marking Scale' table below. This scale applies to the examination of scripts, theses and other formally assessed material. In the assessment of an essay and the writing of feedback to students, the examiners look for evidence of work that is responsive to the following criteria:

Argumentation and understanding	Analysis	Organisation and presentation
Understanding of key concepts	Use of sources and evidence to make or assess claims	Clear and logical structure of the work
Coherent and logically consistent argument	Critical appraisal of sources and evidence	Clearly written in good English
Research and reading of appropriate sources	Application of argument	Proper use of citations and bibliographic referencing
	Application of research methods	

Assignments will be assessed against the above criteria, with reference to the following marking scale:

	Mark Band	Marking criteria
Distinction	80–100	This is for **outstanding work** that will feature **all or almost all** of the following characteristics: original argument, creative selection of sources, expert application of method, highly critical appraisal and analysis, excellent integration of theory and evidence, excellent expression and presentation, consistent citation that follows bibliographic norms. In addition, work at this level: • Directly answers the question set, demonstrating mastery of relevant material and literature. • Demonstrates complete understanding of all the relevant standard and advanced concepts, frameworks and techniques at the highest level of ability. • If required by the questions set, demonstrates the highest level of expertise in the application of the methods and calculations associated with the above concepts, frameworks and techniques. • Explores the efficacy of the frameworks employed and raises original and outstanding issues, or issues that are unresolved and why they should be investigated further.
	75–79	This is for **superb work** that will feature **most** of the following characteristics: original argument, creative selection of sources, expert application of method, highly critical appraisal and analysis, excellent integration of theory and evidence, excellent expression and presentation, consistent citation that follows bibliographic norms. In addition, work at this level: • Directly answers the question set, drawing on a very wide range of relevant material and literature. • Demonstrates excellence in understanding of all the relevant standard and advanced concepts, frameworks and techniques. • If required by the questions set, demonstrates excellence in the application of the methods and calculations associated with the above concepts, frameworks and techniques. • Uses frameworks to assess the questions set in a very effective manner and shows thorough knowledge of their shortcomings.
	70–74	This is for **excellent work** that will feature **many** of the following characteristics: original argument, creative selection of sources, expert application of method, highly critical appraisal and analysis, excellent integration of theory and evidence, excellent expression and presentation, consistent citation that follows bibliographic norms. In addition, work at this level: • Directly answers the question set, drawing on a wide range of relevant material and literature. • Demonstrates excellence in understanding of all the relevant standard and advanced concepts, frameworks and techniques. • If required by the questions set, also demonstrates excellence in the application of the methods and calculations associated with the above concepts, frameworks and techniques. • Uses frameworks to assess the questions set in a very effective manner and shows good knowledge of their shortcomings.
Merit	65–69	This is for work of **fine quality with a well-defined focus**. Such work will include some elements of Distinction and feature **all or almost all** of the following characteristics: thoughtful argument, well-researched selection of sources, good critical appraisal, well integrated theory and evidence, good/clear expression and presentation, accurate citation and bibliography. In addition, work at this level:

		- Addresses the question set, drawing on a good range of relevant material and literature. - Demonstrates a very good understanding of a wide range of the relevant standard and advanced concepts, frameworks and techniques - If required by the questions set, demonstrates very good abilities in the application of the methods and calculations associated with the above concepts, frameworks and techniques. - Uses frameworks to assess the questions set in an effective manner and shows some knowledge of their shortcomings.
Pass	60–64	This is for work of **good quality with a mostly well-defined focus**. Such work will feature **many** of the following characteristics: thoughtful argument, well-researched selection of sources, good critical appraisal, well integrated theory and evidence, good/clear expression and presentation, accurate citation and bibliography. In addition, work at this level: - Addresses the question set, drawing on a range of relevant material and literature. - Demonstrates a good understanding of the relevant standard and some advanced concepts, frameworks and techniques - If required by the questions set, demonstrates good abilities in the application of the methods and calculations associated with the above concepts, frameworks and techniques. - Uses frameworks to assess the questions set in an effective manner but may show limited knowledge of their shortcomings.
	50–59	This is for work that **reaches the overall standard** required of a Master's student and will feature many if not all of the following characteristics: standard argument and range of sources used, a solid but not thorough synthesis of ideas, minor errors or inaccuracies in analysis, adequate expression and presentation, flaws or gaps in citation, and failure to follow bibliographic norms. In addition, work at this level: - Addresses the question set, drawing on a limited range of relevant material and literature. - Demonstrates adequate understanding of the relevant standard concepts, frameworks and techniques. - If required by the questions set, demonstrates adequate abilities in the application of the methods and calculations associated with the above concepts, frameworks and techniques. - Uses frameworks to assess the questions set in a somewhat effective manner but may show little knowledge of their shortcomings.
Fail	40–49	This is for work that **does not reach the overall standard** required of a Master's student. It will feature many if not all of the following characteristics: weak argument, narrow range of sources used, descriptive account, poor expression and presentation, significant errors in analysis, inaccurate citation and gaps in bibliography. In addition, work at this level: - May attempt to answer the question set, but fail to draw on key material and literature. - May show inadequate understanding of the relevant standard concepts, frameworks and techniques. - If required by the questions set, may demonstrate inadequate abilities in the application of the methods and calculations associated with the above concepts, frameworks and techniques. - May be lacking in coherence and short on analysis but shows some relevant – if limited – knowledge of the topic under discussion.
	0–39	This is for work that shows a basic **lack of knowledge and ability**. Such work will feature many of the following characteristics: failure to address the question set, very weak argument, little use of even standard sources, descriptive, with large gaps, very poor presentation with flawed expression and extensive flaws in citation and bibliography.

		In addition, work at this level:
		• May fail to answer the question set. • May fail to demonstrate any understanding of the relevant standard concepts, frameworks and techniques. • If required by the questions set, may fail to demonstrate any abilities in the application of the methods and calculations associated with the above concepts, frameworks and techniques. • May be lacking in coherence and short on analysis with little or no demonstrated knowledge of the topic under discussion.

3.3   Verification and reconciliation of marks

Each MSc examination script, summative essay, and thesis (henceforth submission) will be marked independently by two examiners or assessors; normally one marker will be a course convener.

After independently marking each submission, the two markers will meet to reconcile their marks. If the discrepancies are 5 marks or less and do not straddle a key boundary: ±50 (fail), ±65 (Merit), or ±70 (Distinction), the final mark will automatically be the average of the two marks (rounding up). If the marks straddle a key boundary, or if the difference between individual marks is greater than 5 marks, then the two markers will discuss the discrepancy and attempt to reach an agreement on a reconciled mark. If after discussion the original assessors are unable to reach consensus on the appropriate mark, the script will be sent to a third marker. In the case of a fail mark, a dispute in the mark, or where the marks from the first two assessors straddle a class border, the external examiner will normally review the work and the agreed mark. All marks will be reported to the Chair of Examiners.

For papers made up of a number of questions, the overall marks awarded are determined by the method indicated in section 2 above. In those cases where each element is equally weighted, the markers will agree each individual element first, and those agreed marks will be averaged for an overall mark. Averages are rounded to the nearest whole number (half rounded up).

Assessors' marks are advisory to the Board of Examiners and will be provisional until the final Board meeting in September.

3.4   Scaling

The Examiners may choose to scale marks where in their academic judgement:

a)   a paper was more difficult or easy than in previous years, and/or

b)   an optional paper was more or less difficult than other optional papers taken by students in a particular year, and/or

c)   a paper has generated a spread of marks which are not a fair reflection of student performance on the University's standard scale for the expression of agreed final marks, i.e. the marks do not reflect the qualitative marks descriptors.

Such scaling is used to ensure that candidates' marks are not advantaged or disadvantaged by any of these situations. In each case, examiners will establish if they have sufficient evidence for scaling. Scaling will only be considered and undertaken after moderation of a paper has been completed, and a complete run of marks for all papers is available.

If it is decided that it is appropriate to use scaling, the examiners will review a sample of papers either side of the classification borderlines to ensure that the outcome of scaling is consistent with academic views of what constitutes an appropriate performance within in each class.

Detailed information about why scaling was necessary and how it was applied will be included in the Examiners' report and the algorithms used will be published for the information of all examiners and students.

3.5   Short-weight convention and departure from rubric in examinations

The maximum deduction that can be made for short weight should be equivalent to the proportion of the answer that is missing.

Where a candidate has failed to answer a compulsory question, or failed to answer the required number of questions in different sections, the complete script will be marked and the issue flagged. Details for individual papers are given above in section 2. The Board of Examiners will consider all such cases on a per paper basis so that consistent penalties are applied.

3.6   Penalties for late or non-submission of submitted work

The scale of penalties agreed by the board of examiners in relation to late submission of assessed items is set out below. Details of the circumstances in which such penalties might apply can be found in the *Examination Regulations* (Regulations for the Conduct of University Examinations, Part 14.)

Late submission	Penalty
Up to one day *(submitted on the day but after the deadline)*	-5 marks
Each additional day *(i.e., two days late = -6 marks, three days late = -7 marks, etc.; note that a new day starts at midnight and each weekend day counts as a full day for the purposes of mark deductions)*	-1 mark
Max. deducted marks up to 14 days late	-18 marks
More than 14 calendar days after the deadline	Fail

Failure to submit a required element of assessment will result in the failure of the assessment. The mark for any resit of the assessment will normally be capped at 50.

3.7 Penalties for over-length work and departure from approved titles or subject-matter in submitted work

Where a candidate submits a thesis or other piece of written coursework which exceeds the word limit prescribed by the relevant regulation, the assessors may suggest to the Board of Examiners to reduce the mark by up to one grade. The final decision on penalties to be applied rests with the Board of Examiners to ensure that penalties are applied consistently.

3.8   Penalties for poor academic practice in submitted work

The Examination Board shall deal wholly with cases of poor academic practice where the material under review is small and does not exceed 10% of the whole.

Assessors should mark work on its academic merit with the board responsible for deducting marks for derivative or poor referencing.

Determined by the extent of poor academic practice, the board shall deduct between 1% and 10% of the marks available for cases of poor referencing where material is widely available factual information or a technical description that could not be paraphrased easily; where passage(s) draw on a variety of sources, either verbatim or derivative, in patchwork fashion (and examiners consider that this represents poor academic practice rather than an attempt to deceive); where some attempt has been made to provide references, however incomplete (e.g. footnotes but no quotation marks, Harvard-style references at the end of a paragraph, inclusion in bibliography); or where passage(s) are 'grey literature' i.e. a web source with no clear owner.

If a student has previously had marks deducted for poor academic practice or has been referred to the Proctors for suspected plagiarism the case must always be referred to the Proctors.

Where assessment includes open-book examinations, candidates will be required to sign up to the University's honour code.

All assessed coursework that is submitted through the University approved online submissions platform will automatically be screened for poor academic practice through Turnitin.

3.9 Penalties for non-attendance at examinations

Failure to attend an examination will result in the failure of the assessment. The mark for any resit after non-attendance will normally be capped at 50.

4. Progression rules and classification conventions

4.1   Qualitative descriptors of Distinction, Merit, Pass, Fail

Classifications for the degree as a whole are awarded according to the same principles outlined in 3.2 above. In particular, a Distinction will be awarded to students who consistently perform at the Distinction level in individual parts of the degree, and who do not fail any assessment element.

A Merit classification will be awarded to students who consistently perform at or above Merit level in individual parts of the degree, who do not fail any assessment element, but who fall short of the expectations for a Distinction.

A Pass classification will be awarded to students who consistently perform at or above Pass level in individual parts of the degree, but who fall short of the expectations for Merit or fail one or more assessment elements on first attempt.

Students who fail to achieve the standard for a passing grade on any one assessment element twice or more will be deemed to have failed the degree.

4.2   Final outcome rules

For a candidate to pass the degree of MSc the candidate must pass all seven parts of the course. Assessments have the following weighting towards the final degree outcome:

Paper	Weighting
Research Design for Social Data Science (overall paper mark) *Both assessment items are equally weighted*	7.5%
Introduction to Data Science and Machine Learning	15%
Data and Society I	7.5%
Data and Society II	7.5%
Applied Analytical Statistics	10%
Option paper 1	10%
Option paper 2	10%
Thesis	32.5%

Except in the event of a candidate failing one or more assessment elements (see 5 below), students who have an average of 70 or higher across the seven parts calculated with the weightings set out above will automatically be awarded a Distinction.

Except in the event of a candidate failing one or more assessment element, students who have an average of 65 or higher across the seven parts, calculated with the weightings set out above; and who do not meet the criteria for a Distinction will automatically be awarded a Merit.

Candidates who fail any element of the examination on first attempt will not normally be eligible for the award of a Distinction or Merit.

The Board of Examiners will review all marks and may award a Distinction (or Merit) to a student who does not automatically qualify for that classification if the overall performance of a candidate is determined to justify a Distinction (or Merit); this will normally only be considered in cases where the overall mark is borderline (i.e. one mark below) a Distinction (or Merit) and the thesis has gained a Distinction (or Merit).

4.3   Use of vivas

Students whose work is considered to be on the borderline between particular classifications (i.e. one mark below) may be called to a viva-voce by the Board of Examiners if it is felt that they may present further evidence that would enable them to be upgraded.

5.   Resits

A candidate who fails one or more summative essays, examinations or thesis will be permitted one further attempt to resit the failed assessment(s). Examinations may normally be resat in Trinity term within the same academic year or in the following academic year at the usual examination times. Summative essays may normally be resubmitted within the same academic year. Resubmission dates will normally fall during Trinity Term or the Long Vacation and are set out in the graduate studies handbook. The thesis may normally only be resubmitted in August of the following academic year at the usual thesis submission deadline. The only exceptions to work being submitted on the next occasion on which the examination is offered will be when special permission has been granted by the University Proctors and the department Board of Examiners.

Where a part consists of more than one assessment, for example written work and a timed examination, if the candidate passes the written work but fails the timed examination, they are only required to resit the failed assessment (in this example the timed examination) not all the assessments for the part.

Candidates who fail any summative assessment or thesis of the degree on the basis of poor academic performance at the first attempt cannot normally be awarded more than a Merit (i.e., cannot be awarded a Distinction) and the maximum mark will normally be 69 at the second attempt. Where a part consists of more than one assessment, the mark for the assessment will be capped at 69, but the mark for the whole part will not be capped. In the event of a resit after a fail on academic grounds, the resubmitted work can either be a reworked version of the original submission or a new submission based on a different topic of relevance to the course syllabus.

Candidates who fail any summative assessment or thesis due to a technical fail (non-attendance or non-submission), marks at the second attempt will be capped at 50. Where a part consists of more than one assessment, the mark for the assessment will be capped at 50, and the mark for the whole part will be capped at 50.

Candidates will be allowed only one opportunity to retake failed degree assessment elements and must do so within six terms of initial registration. Candidates who have failed any assessment cannot normally be awarded a Merit or Distinction classification overall. Please see the Social Data Science MSc Handbook for further information on resubmission.

6.   Consideration of mitigating circumstances

A candidate's final outcome will first be considered using the classification rules/final outcome rules as described above in section 4.2. The Exam Board will then consider any further information they have on individual circumstances.

Where a candidate or candidates have made a submission, under Part 13 of the Regulations for Conduct of University Examinations, that unforeseen circumstances may have had an impact on their performance in an examination, a subset of the board (the 'Mitigating Circumstances Panel') will meet to discuss the individual applications and band the seriousness of each application on a scale of 1-3 with 1 indicating minor impact, 2 indicating moderate impact, and 3 indicating very serious impact. The Panel will evaluate, on the basis of the information provided to it, the relevance of the circumstances to examinations and assessment, and the strength

of the evidence provided in support. Examiners will also note whether all or a subset of papers were affected, being aware that it is possible for circumstances to have different levels of impact on different papers. The banding information will be used at the final board of examiners meeting to decide whether and how to adjust a candidate's results. Further information on the procedure is provided in the *Examination and Assessment Framework, Annex E* and information for students on mitigating circumstances is provided on the Oxford Student portal.

Candidates who have indicated they wish to be considered for Declared to Deserve Masters (DDM) will first be considered for a classified degree, taking into account any individual MCE. If that is not possible and they meet the DDM eligibility criteria, they will be awarded DDM. Please refer to the declared awards page for detailed information on the DDM award.

7.   **Details of examiners and rules on communicating with examiners**

The External Examiner for the MSc Social Data Science for the 2025-26 academic year is Dr Lorien Jasny (University of Exeter). The internal examiners are Prof Ralph Schroeder (Chair), Dr Fabian Braesemann and Prof Joss Wright.

Candidates should not under any circumstances seek to make contact with individual internal or external examiners.