



Bachelor of Arts in Persian

Course Handbook

Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies

Academic Year 2025-26

Course Co-ordinator – Professor Edmund Herzig

This handbook applies to students who, in Michaelmas 2025, are starting their course (for information relating to the FPE), or are entering the Final Honour School (for information relating to the FHS). The information in this handbook may be different for students starting in other years.

The Examination Regulations relating to this course are available here ([Exam Regulations](#)).

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 Senior Academic Administrator, [Edmund Howard](#).

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

General faculty-wide information can be found in the [General Undergraduate Handbook](#).

This Handbook

The handbook sets out the basic framework for the BA in Persian. You should consult the current edition of the Examination Regulations for information regarding your course. The information in this handbook should be read in conjunction with:

- the Faculty's general Undergraduate handbook;
- the Examination Conventions and Rubrics;
- the [Examination Regulations](#);
- the [University Student Handbook](#)
- your college handbook.

If there is a conflict between information in this handbook and the Examination regulations, then you should follow the Examination regulations.

Comments and criticism of the handbook are always welcome; they should be sent to the [Director of Undergraduate Studies](#) or the Senior Academic Administrator, [Edmund Howard](#).

Version history

1	October 2025	Original publication
2	November 2025	Typo corrected on p1
3	2 December 2025	Replaced the option: <i>History of the Middle East during the late Ottoman Age, 1750-1882</i> with <i>The Middle East in the Age of Empire, 1830-1971</i> (p7)

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Introduction

Students will study either Persian sole, or Persian with a subsidiary language.

The aims of Persian sole are:

1. to help you to become proficient in reading, writing, and speaking Persian;
2. to familiarise you with the characters, concerns, and development of Persian literature, both modern and pre-modern, and to develop your literary critical skills;
3. to familiarise you with the major themes and questions of Iranian history from medieval to modern times, and to develop your skills in historical analysis and argument;
4. to give you scope to specialise in those areas of Persian and Iranian studies that most interest you and to develop your skills in independent research and extended writing, through optional papers and the dissertation.

The aims of Persian with a subsidiary language are:

1. to make you proficient in reading, writing, and speaking modern Persian;
2. to familiarise you with the character, concerns, and development of Persian literature, both modern and pre-modern, and to develop your literary critical skills;
3. to familiarise you with the major themes and questions of Iranian history from medieval to modern times, and to develop your skills in historical analysis and argument;
4. to give you scope to specialise in one area of Persian and Iranian studies that particularly interests you and to develop your skills in independent research and extended writing through the dissertation;
5. to provide you with a firm grounding in a second language with which Persian is historically and culturally linked, and to introduce you to the literature of that language.

Outline

Year 1

The first three terms of your course are designed to give you a sound foundation in modern Persian, and to introduce you to Islamic religion and culture and the history of the Middle East.

Persian Prelims comprise three examination papers of 3 hours each:

- Translation from Persian and reading comprehension
- Translation into Persian and essay in Persian
- Islamic history and culture

Students will attend Persian language classes for up to 10 hours per week, as well as working independently on the course material provided. Students will be required to build up a basic vocabulary, and to learn to use all of the essential grammatical structures of modern Persian. The teaching method combines systematic presentation of grammatical

and thematic topics during language classes with regular assignments in reading, writing and translation. There will be regular written tests taken in class time to monitor students' progress and identify areas for development. The modern and pre-modern set texts for this year will be available from the Faculty Office. These are modern and pre-modern Persian texts which will have been read and discussed in class.

Spoken language classes will develop students' speaking and listening comprehension skills.

In Michaelmas Term, Hilary Term, and the first 1/2 of Trinity Term, students will attend 1 1-hour lecture per week and 1 1-hour tutorial every fortnight on Islamic history and culture. For the tutorials, students will be required to write 10 essays throughout the year (4 in each of Michaelmas and Hilary Terms, and 2 in Trinity Term).

In Hilary and Trinity Terms, students will also prepare for the Year Abroad. The Faculty will support students in applying for the approved course, and for their visa (where applicable).

Year 2

The second year of study comprises the Year Abroad in Yerevan, Armenia for 12 weeks starting in September, and Dushanbe, Tajikistan for two 8-week terms starting in January (with a two-week holiday break coinciding with the Nawruz holiday approximately from March 16th to March 31st between the two terms).

For detailed and further information on your year abroad, accommodation, and areas of study, please contact the Year Abroad Co-ordinators: Dr Farniyaz Zaker and Ms Ani Beyt-Movsess.

It is most important for you to use the time during the year abroad to improve your knowledge and skills in the language, and to deepen your understanding of those aspects of Persian culture and history in which you wish to specialise. You should find it an exciting period, one which will test your initiative, stamina, and ability to respond to a quite different society. It will be a time to carry out research for your dissertation and to start thinking about and reading for your optional papers.

Years 3 and 4

For FHS, students will be pursuing several different kinds of study in parallel. Language work will continue steadily, and will continue to develop your capacity to speak, read, and write modern Persian. You will have up to 5 hours of language classes each week, covering reading comprehension, translation into and out of Persian, essay-writing in Persian and speaking and listening comprehension.

Classes and tutorials for your literature papers will form another major part of your course work, covering modern and pre-modern literature, both poetry and prose. You will read and analyse the set texts and write essays on literary and literary historical questions.

You will also attend lectures and have tutorials on Iranian history. Finally, you will write a dissertation, mainly in Hilary Term of Year 4, where you have the opportunity to pursue in greater depth a topic that particularly interests you, whether this be in language, literature, history, culture, or social studies. Your dissertation supervisor will guide your research and

provide feedback on plans and early drafts of your work. Your dissertation topic has to be approved by the Faculty Board at the beginning of your final year.

For students taking only Persian, you will be able to tailor your course to your own interests through your choice of two optional papers. You may choose to concentrate more on literary or historical study, or to maintain a balance between them both. The teaching for the optional literature and history will usually be similar to that for the core components of the course. Depending on the options you have chosen, you can expect to spend 4-6 hours per week from Michaelmas Term of Year 3 to the end of Michaelmas Term of Year 4 in classes devoted to the close reading and explication of these texts, to which you must come adequately prepared.

For students taking Persian with a subsidiary language, your subsidiary language will demand at least one-third of your time, especially in Year 3, when you will be attending an intensive elementary language class. The 2 years of the FHS course offer an excellent opportunity to acquire a solid grounding in a second language, but it does mean that you give up the possibility of shaping your course to your own particular interests, as you lose the 2 optional papers. The dissertation does, however, allow you to explore a subject that particularly interests in depth.

Graduates will have acquired a range of expertise and skills. Linguistic proficiency in Persian and knowledge of Persian literature and Iranian history, as well as of the general culture and religion of Islam, may lead some towards a variety of jobs connected with Iran and the Middle East, such as diplomacy and international organisations, journalism, broadcasting, publishing, charities and NGOs, and business. Depending on the options you have chosen, you may also be equipped with specialist knowledge in other areas – for example, choosing the papers in Islamic art and architecture might lead you towards work in museums, art galleries, or the art market. A significant proportion of our graduates choose to continue their studies at the graduate level with a view to an academic career.

Students should note that not all subsidiary languages and options may be available in a given year.

Available subsidiary languages:

- Arabic
- Aramaic and Syriac
- Classical or Modern Armenian
- Classics (for students taking Asian and Middle Eastern Studies and Classics)
- Early Iranian
- Hebrew
- Hindi/Urdu
- Turkish

Examination Papers

Persian	Persian with a subsidiary language
1. Unprepared translation from Persian 2. Translation into Persian and essay in Persian 3. Spoken Persian 4. Persian Literature: 1000 – 1400 5. Persian Literature: 1400 – 1900 6. Persian Literature: 1900 – the present 7. Themes in Iranian history 8. and 9. Two optional papers 10. Dissertation	1. Unprepared translation from Persian 2. Translation into Persian and essay in Persian 3. Spoken Persian 4. and 5. Two papers selected from the following three: a. Persian Literature: 1000 – 1400 b. Persian Literature: 1400 – 1900 c. Persian Literature: 1900 – the present 6. Themes in Iranian history 7. 8. and 9. An approved subsidiary language 10. Dissertation

Options

- The Transition from Sasanian to Islamic Persian (up to the 10th Century CE)
- Safavid History
- Qajar History
- Iranian History from 1921 to 1979
- Iranian History from the 1979 Revolution to the Present
- Early Islamic Historiography
- Islamic Art and Architecture of the Persian-speaking World
- Ottoman State and Society, 1566-1700
- The Middle East in the Age of Empire, 1830-1971
- A short-term Further Subject, subject to approval

Not all options will be available in any given year.

For details of Early Iranian as a Subsidiary Language, see the [FHS Exam Regulations](#).

For details of the other subsidiary languages available to students taking Persian with a Subsidiary Language, see the appropriate course handbook for the language as a main subject and/or the Exam Regulations.

Persian as a Subsidiary Language

Students taking BA Arabic, BA Turkish, and BA Classics with Asian and Middle Eastern Studies may take Persian as a subsidiary language.

1. Please refer to the AMES UG Subsidiary Languages Handbook for more information.

Recommended Patterns of Teaching (RPT)

Below is an indication of the type and number of teaching hours on this course.

FPE Persian (Year 1)

Paper	Term	Faculty		College		Comments
		Lectures	Classes	Tutorials	Classes	
[1.] Translation from Persian and reading comprehension	MT		80			All Persian language teaching contributes to both papers
	HT		80			
	TT		80			
[2.] Translation into Persian and essay in Persian						See above
[3.] Islamic history and culture	MT	X		X		Two hours lectures per week and four tutorials per term, MT-HT; half that in TT, wks 1-4. Tutorials organised by the Faculty. Arabic only, excluding EMEL.
	HT	X		X		
	TT	X		X		
<u>Notes</u>						
The course co-ordinator for the BA in Persian is responsible for allocating tutorials, etc.						

FHS Persian (Years 3 and 4)

Paper	Term	Faculty		College		Comments
		Lectures	Classes	Tutorials	Classes	<i>Figures in this table are in hours unless otherwise stated.</i>
[1.] Unprepared translation from Persian	MT		32			All Persian language teaching contributes to all three papers 32 hours in Year 3. 24 hours in Year 4
[2.] Translation into Persian and essay in Persian	HT		32			
[3.] Spoken Persian	TT		32/24			
[4.] Persian Literature: 1000 – 1400	HT		16-20	4-5		Year 3 1 revision class in year 4
	TT		2			
[5.] Persian Literature: 1400 – 1900	TT		16-20	4-5		Year 3 1 revision class in year 4
	TT		2			
[6.] Persian Literature: 1900 – the present	MT		16-20	4-5		Year 3, except 2 revision classes in year 4
[7.] Themes in Iranian history	HT	9		6-8		Year 3 1 revision class in year 4
	TT		1			
[8.] Optional Paper (e.g. The Transition from Sasanian to Islamic Persia (up to the 10th Century CE))	Any term					Year 4 or 3 (if in year 4, teaching is in MT; if in year 3, teaching is usually in HT, but may be in TT).
		(8)	1	8		For some, but not all, optional papers, a lecture is given as well as a series of tutorials. The single class is a revision class given in TT of year 4.
[9.] Optional Paper II						See above for likely teaching patterns.
[10.] Dissertation				3-4		
<u>Notes</u>						
The course co-ordinator for the BA in Persian is responsible for allocating tutorials, etc.						
Students doing Persian with a subsidiary language (e.g. BA Persian with Arabic) take						

Teaching Staff

- Professor [Walter Armbrust](#), Associate Professor of Modern Middle Eastern Studies (St Antony's)
- Dr Ani Beyt-Movsess, Lecturer of Persian Language (Brasenose)
- Professor [Dominic Parviz Brookshaw](#), Professor of Persian Literature (Wadham)
- Dr [Emine Çakır](#), Lecturer in Turkish Language
- Dr [Stephanie Cronin](#), Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Research Fellow (St Antony's)
- Professor [Edmund Herzig](#), Masoumeh and Fereydoon Soudavar Professor of Persian Studies (Wadham)
- Dr [Nadia Jamil](#), Senior Language Lecturer in Classical and Modern Standard Arabic (on study leave from 2018-2026)
- Mr [Taj Kandoura](#), Lecturer in Arabic Language
- Professor [Laurent Mignon](#), Professor of Turkish Literature (St Antony's)
- Professor [Fitzroy Morrissey](#), Associate Professor of Islamic Studies and Law (Pembroke)
- Professor [Aslı Niyazioğlu](#), Associate Professor of Ottoman History (Exeter)
- Professor [Tahera Qutbuddin](#), Abdulaziz Saud AlBabtain Laudian Professor of Arabic (St John's)
- Professor [Philip Robins](#), Professor of Middle East Politics (St Antony's)
- Professor [Eugene Rogan](#), Professor of Modern Middle Eastern History (St Antony's)
- Professor [Christian Sahner](#), Associate Professor of Islamic History (New College)
- Professor [Nicolai Sinai](#), Shaikh Zayed Associate Professor of Islamic Studies (Pembroke)
- Professor [Luke Treadwell](#), Samir Shamma Associate Professor of Islamic Numismatics (St Cross)
- Professor [Yuhan Vevaina](#), Bahari Associate Professor of Sasanian Studies (Wolfson)
- Dr [Michael Willis](#), University Research Lecturer and H.M. King Mohammed VI Fellow in Moroccan and Mediterranean Studies (St Antony's)
- Professor [Zeynep Yürekli-Görkay](#), Associate Professor of Islamic Art and Architecture (Wolfson)
- Dr [Farniyaz Zaker](#), Lecturer in Persian Studies.

Examination Regulations

The Examination Regulations relating to this course are available at <https://examregs.admin.ox.ac.uk/>. If there is a conflict between information in this handbook and the Examination Regulations then you should follow the Examination Regulations.

Examinations and Assessment

For details on the assessment of individual AMES papers, please refer to the [exam rubrics and conventions](#) available on the Student Hub.

Deadlines

Date	Year of Course	Event	How
Monday 9 th Week Trinity Term	1	Provisional start date of the First Public Examinations.	
Friday 4 th Week Michaelmas Term	4	Deadline for exam entry.	Via Student Self Service
Monday 0 th Week Michaelmas Term	4	Deadline for applications for approval for Optional Subjects (Persian only) and Paper 8 <u>and</u> Paper 9 (two options)	Online Options Form to be distributed by Academic Administration
12 noon Monday 0 th Week Hilary Term	4	Deadline for applications for approval for dissertation titles (Persian and Persian with Subsidiary Language) (as in Examination Regulations).	Online Thesis Title Approval Form available through the Intranet Approval Forms page
12 noon Friday 10 th Week Hilary Term	4	Deadline for submission of dissertation.	Via Inspira
0 th Week Trinity Term	4	Oral examinations for Persian language.	
Monday 7 th Week Trinity Term	4	Provisional start date of the Final Honour School examinations.	

Student Information and Support

Student Hub

The [Student Hub](#) is an ongoing project to provide a live online version of the handbook, together with more detailed course information and further resources such as forms and exam conventions, as well as archived documents from previous years. You can also access the Student Hub through the top bar of the Faculty Website, through the '**NEW Faculty Intranet**' button. You will need to log in using your SSO.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

In accordance with our [Statement of Values](#), the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies is committed to creating a teaching, learning, and research environment in which every member of our community – at every academic level from undergraduate to senior academic, and among library and administrative staff – can achieve their full professional potential without discrimination on the basis of age, disability, gender, marriage or civil

partnership, nationality, pregnancy or parenthood, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

We welcome suggestions for making our courses more diverse and inclusive. In general, you are encouraged to tell us if you see any ways in which the courses or this handbook might be improved. Staff and students are welcome to contact the Equality and Diversity team with any suggestions or concerns:

Arabic, Persian and Turkish Group Equality and Diversity Representative: : [Walter Armbrust](#)

Faculty Equality and Diversity Officer: [Dominic Brookshaw](#)

Welfare and Support

Our community aims to encourage and support all students. The student experience at Oxford offers lots of opportunities for you to thrive, grow, and look after your own wellbeing, but we know that sometimes there can be stresses and challenges too.

We want to give you the agency to navigate welfare support, and to make your own decisions. This includes by:

- Keeping in touch with your College and Department, and letting them know if you need help
- Seeking support when needed
- Supporting your fellow students
- Registering with Disability Advisory Service for structured support if you have a disability

Should you have any concerns, or for guidance and support, please do not hesitate to contact the following people:

Disability Coordinators: [Thomas Hall](#) and [Edmund Howard](#)

Welfare Contact: [Edmund Howard](#)

Harassment Officers: [Laurence Mann](#) and [Leyla Najafzade](#)

Details of the range of sources of support available in the University are available from the [Oxford Students](#) website, including in relation to mental and physical health and disability.

More information about the support and resources available can be found in the general Undergraduate Handbook and on the Faculty and University websites.