

Master of Philosophy in Traditional East Asia

Course Handbook

Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies

Academic Year 2022-23 v.1

Course Director – Prof. [Dirk Meyer](#)

The Examination Regulations relating to this course are available here (LINK TO BE ADDED WHEN 2022-23 EXAMINATION REGULATIONS PUBLISHED).

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, Chris Mitchell (chris.mitchell@orinst.ox.ac.uk).

The information in this handbook is accurate as at Michaelmas Term 2022; 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.

THIS HANDBOOK

The handbook sets out the basic framework for the MPhil Traditional East Asia, and what to do should you encounter delays, setbacks, or need to make changes. It provides basic advice about writing your thesis and submitting it for examination.

You should consult the current edition of the Examination Regulations (LINK TO BE ADDED WHEN 2022-23 EXAMINATION REGULATIONS PUBLISHED) for information regarding your course. The information in this handbook should be read in conjunction with:

- the Faculty's general Masters handbook;
- 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 Graduate Studies](#) or the Senior Academic Administrator, [Chris Mitchell](#).

Version history

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INTRODUCTION TO THE MPhil TRADITIONAL EAST ASIA

Introduction

Any understanding of East Asia, contemporary or otherwise, depends on familiarity with a general tradition expressed across the region comprising China, Korea, and Japan. That general tradition, which we might call 'Sinitic', has multiple local variations and adaptations. These variations and adaptations reveal the differences we think of as 'Chinese' or 'Korean' or 'Japanese'. An overtly comparative examination of political, economic, social, philosophical, literary, linguistic, and other disciplinary approaches reveals similarities and differences and can be more valuable than taking a single country alone.

Our course is designed to train up researchers so they can work across the region and also possess expertise in at least one of the major cultures. For the most part, we will be reading and analysing written texts. These can also include imagery and cartographic representations. Primary and secondary texts will come in a variety of languages, so we will be very concerned with your language acquisition. If you are working on China or Korea, you will quickly see that the best and most extensive modern scholarship on either is in Japanese. If you are working on Korea or Japan, you will quickly see that knowledge of Classical Chinese or Classical Japanese or Middle Korean is indispensable. We are also interested in honing your analytical abilities and bringing you up to date on current scholarship in the English language. Therefore, we will ask you to read widely in English and compare across the region. We will encourage you to follow your intuition and look for large patterns as well as local peculiarities.

The central vision of the course is regional and comparative. The main tools it teaches are linguistic, analytical, and bibliographical. With a judicious balance of language training, prescribed texts, seminar work, and a thesis, the degree is intended to provide advanced scholarly training in East Asian languages, a broad introduction to the region, and stand as preparation for advancement to the D.Phil. or M.Litt. Of course, the degree can also be an end in itself.

The MPhil is very intensive, especially in the first year. Students must treat the university vacations as integral parts of their work time and take limited holidays. Language study will be time-consuming. Terms are short and essay assignments come quickly. All essays must be completed and handed in during the term. From the start of the course students should begin thinking about their thesis topic. They should expect to spend the Easter Vacation of the second year finishing their theses, which must be submitted by the end of Sixth Week of the sixth term or the last term in the second year. The final examination is sat immediately after the end of the sixth term.

Oxford offers expertise in classical, medieval, and early-modern East Asian Studies, and we encourage you to take every opportunity the University has to offer. For example, within the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies there are scholars with specialities in Tibetan, Sanskrit, Japanese Historical Linguistics, Chinese Phonology, Korean Phonology and Historical Linguistics, and other specialities in addition to disciplinary specialities such as History, Philosophy, Literature, and Religion.

Numbers on the course are small and you will see the teaching staff very often. You are also free to come and discuss the course and your needs at any time. Because of this frequent and close contact, the information in this section is kept quite brief and supplements other documents you will receive.

First year

Your first-year work has three parts.

You should have some proficiency in a modern East Asian language (Chinese, Korea, or Japanese). If your proficiency in your main language is not up to academic standards, you will be required to prepare for an examination in that language. If, on arrival, your proficiency is judged to be up to academic standards, you will choose a different modern East Asian language for research purposes and prepare for the examination in the selected language. A three-hour qualifying language in your modern language is held at the end of the third term.

You will be required to follow a general course in a classical East Asian language: Classical Chinese, Classical Japanese, or Middle Korean. Instruction may take the form of lectures, text classes, or some combination of the two. You will prepare and present English translations in text classes. Depending on your ability you may be permitted to follow more than one classical language, but you must choose only one classical language for assessment in your qualifying examination.

In the first year, you will be required to survey disciplinary approaches to East Asia. For this, you will be required to prepare a 2,000-word essay every two weeks for the East Asia Colloquium. You will attend this general overview graduate colloquium, for which you receive a reading list and write four 2,000-word essays per term. The essays should compare at least two scholarly pieces of writing and discuss the disciplinary approach across China, Korea, and Japan. The colloquium convenes every two weeks in a 90-minute seminar to present the gist of student essays and discuss the topic at hand. One of the course coordinators will either lead the seminar or recruit an expert colleague to lead. First Week of the first year will involve a short introduction, followed by seminars in weeks 2, 4, 6, and 8 of each term. The qualifying examination for the colloquium consists of an assessment of your three best essays from the twelve prepared over the year. No marks are given on each essay during the colloquia, but comments and feedback are given, and you must choose and submit one essay at the end of each term that you feel presents the best of your work. You may re-write and edit your original essay using the comments before you submit the essay. The topics will include but not be limited to the following:

Michaelmas Term	Hilary Term	Trinity Term
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Geography and climate• Archaeology and art• Languages• Kingship and bureaucracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Writing and texts• East Asian philosophy• East Asian religion• East Asian literature	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Diplomacy and trade• Militarisation and war• Social structures and economic history• East Asian Art

Second year

There are no modern language requirements in the second year, but you may monitor or audit classes in a modern or classical language that you were unable to study or for which you would like further study.

Your second-year work has three parts.

In the second year, you will spend a good portion of your time researching and writing your thesis with fewer contact hours for class work. Applications for the approval of the thesis title are due by Monday of 0th Week of Hilary Term. Students present their interim research results at one public colloquium to be held at the end of the fifth term. After the first week of the Trinity Term, students

may not solicit advice on their theses from their supervisors. This means that the draft of the thesis should be completed by the beginning of Trinity Term, leaving about one month for final proofreading and polishing. Such a schedule allows additional time to review and revise other material prior to the final examinations.

You will be required to continue your study of a classical language by reading prescribed texts. This requirement consists of reading texts in Classical Chinese or Classical Japanese or Middle Korean. Texts are chosen in consultation with one of the Course Coordinators and drawn from canonical literature in the areas of history, literature, and philosophy. The final examination is a three-hour written examination at the end of the second year. You will have eight one-hour classes spread over three terms.

Students will be required to choose a country specialisation out of China, Japan, or Korea. They will be expected to prepare answers to a series of exercises that require they be able to find specific and general information in the classical bibliography of one of the three countries (i.e., training in bibliography and methodology). Students will be given eight one-hour classes spread over three terms. For Korean, students may join the Methodology class that is taught for the MSt in Korean Studies. For Chinese, students may join the Methodology class that is taught for the MSt Traditional China.

Language Requirements

Because research in East Asia before 1900 requires strong language skills, we need to know something about your skills to teach you most effectively. Thus, applicants whose native language is not Chinese, Japanese, or Korean will be asked to supply scores with their applications from one of the major international proficiency examinations. For Chinese, that would be the HSK (Chinese Proficiency Test) with a target level of 4. For Japanese, that would be the Japanese Language Proficiency Test with a target of level of N2. (Additionally, applicants will be required to submit a JCAT score.) For Korean, that would be the Standard Test of Proficiency in Korean (S-TOPIK) with a target level of 4. These test scores are useful to your language teachers to place you accurately within the range of classes on offer.

Applicants with a secondary or tertiary education in Chinese, Japanese, or Korean and those who have an academic proficiency in one of these three languages will be required to study another modern or classical language for examination in the first year. Foreign applicants without a higher degree from an English-language university are expected to supply evidence of achieving 7.5 on the IELTS. We will help students with their English, but we cannot write essays or theses for you. If you find yourself struggling too much, talk with your tutors and investigate the University's Language Centre.

Modern Chinese

Mr. Shio-yun Kan

Modern Chinese is to be taught with students following the MSc Modern Chinese Studies. The target is Upper Intermediate to Advanced Chinese Language. This nine-month course is intended for students who already have two or three years of training in the Chinese language. The objective is to help students achieve advanced levels in the four language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking). By the end of the course, students will be able to read and write 3,000 Chinese characters; translate newspaper articles and documents to and from Chinese and English; summarise academic reading and listening texts and answer questions in English; and give academic presentations in Chinese.

Modern Japanese

Ms. Kaori Nishizawa

Modern Japanese is to be taught with students following the MSc in Modern Japanese Studies. The target is Upper Intermediate to Advanced Japanese Language. This 9-month course is intended for students who already have two or three years of training in the Japanese language. The objective is to help students gain knowledge and develop language skills and strategies in the four skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) for academic purposes. By the end of the course students will be able to use effective skills and strategies appropriate for reading Japanese texts of an academic nature (e.g. newspaper articles, published research papers, etc); enhance their reading speed, amount of reading, and capacity for independent reading; expand their vocabulary for key concepts in relevant subject fields; learn 1,945 jōyō kanji; develop skills to summarise academic reading and listening texts; gain translation skills; develop communication skills in academic contexts, such as skills for public speaking; explain and discuss issues of their specialised field in both writing and speaking; and develop Japanese skills for conducting research according to their needs.

Modern Korean

Dr. Young-hae Chi

Modern Korean is to be taught with students following the MSt in Korean Studies. The target is Upper Intermediate to Advanced Korean Language. This nine-month course is intended for students who already have two or three years of training in Korean language. The objective is to help students achieve advanced levels in the four language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) for academic purposes. By the end of the course students will be able to use effective skills and strategies appropriate for reading Korean texts of an academic nature (e.g. newspaper articles, published research papers, etc); enhance their reading speed, amount of reading, and capacity for independent reading; expand their vocabulary for key concepts in relevant subject fields; develop skills to summarise academic reading and listening texts; gain translation skills; develop communication skills in academic contexts; explain and discuss issues of their specialised field in both writing and speaking; and develop Korean skills for conducting research according to their needs.

Examination and Assessment Structure

Year 1

You will be required to sit two examinations on the East Asian language that you have studied in your first year, including one on your modern language and one on your classical language. You will also submit your three best essays from over the course of the year, submitting one at the end of each term.

Year 2

You will sit one examination on your chosen classical language. The exercise for the country specialisation ('Research Bibliography and Methodology') will be released after the completion of the examination on the classical language and must be submitted by Friday of the same week. You will also submit your thesis of between 20,000 and 30,000 words. Vivas are compulsory unless candidates are excused by the examiners.

Important dates and deadlines

When			What	How/Format
Year 1	Michaelmas Term	Week 9, Friday, 12 noon	Essay 1 submission Word limit: not more than 2,500.	Via Inpera

Year1	Hilary Term	Week 9, Friday, 12 noon	Essay 2 submission Word limit: not more than 2,500.	Via Inspira
Year 1	Trinity Term	Week 9, Friday, 12 noon	Essay 3 submission Word limit: not more than 2,500.	Via Inspira
Year 1	Trinity Term	TBC	Qualifying language exam one	In-person or online examination.
Year 1	Trinity Term	TBC	Qualifying language exam two	In-person or online examination.
Year 2	Hilary Term	Week 0, Monday	Approval of the thesis subject/thesis title	Email: academic.administrator@orinst.ox.ac.uk
Year 2	Trinity Term	Week 6, Thursday, 12 noon	Thesis submission Word limit: not more than 30,000.	Via Inspira
Year 2	Trinity Term	Week 9, Tuesday, 12 noon	Research Bibliography and Methodology exercise released .	Via Inspira
Year 2	Trinity Term	Week 9, Friday, 5pm	Research Bibliography and Methodology exercise submission due .	Via Inspira
Year 2	Trinity Term	TBC	Prescribed texts examination.	In-person or online examination.

Thesis

Approval of Thesis Subject/Title

Departure from approved titles or subject matter will be penalised. The penalty applied will increase the greater the departure from the approved title or subject matter is. After your thesis subject/title is approved there may need to be changes made before submitting. These should be done in consultation with your supervisor and a request to change your thesis title should be emailed to academic.administrator@orinst.ox.ac.uk, with your supervisor copied in for approval. Changes cannot be made once your thesis is submitted.

Examination-related forms, including thesis approval forms, are available on the Faculty webpage here: <https://resources.orinst.ox.ac.uk/forms>

Word Limits

Submissions should not exceed the word limit given in your Examination Regulations and rubrics – including text and footnotes/endnotes but excluding appendices and bibliography.

Further guidance and more information about formatting can be found in the General Guidelines for Thesis Writers below. Examples of MPhil and MSt/MSc theses are available from the Weston Library and can be searched on [SOLO](#) (Search Oxford Libraries Online). Some theses awarded a distinction are eligible to be deposited to the Bodleian Library. Should your thesis be eligible, you will be contacted regarding the procedure after your results are released.

Language Learning and Competency Standards

Though the Faculty works closely with the Disability Advisory Service (DAS) and support students with SpLD, language papers represent competency standards and therefore cannot be replaced with easier language papers or non-language papers. If you have any questions or concerns relating to this please speak with your course director or the [Director of Graduate Studies](#).

EXAMINATIONS AND ASSESSMENT GUIDANCE

Examination Regulations, Conventions and Rubrics

Examination Regulations

Examination Regulations are the immutable framework of study and assessment of University degrees to which students must adhere. The regulations for the MPhil Traditional East Asia can be found here (LINK TO BE ADDED WHEN 2022-23 EXAMINATION REGULATIONS PUBLISHED).

Examination Conventions and Rubrics

These are the formal record and explanation of the specific assessment standards for the course or courses to which they apply. They set out how your examined work will be marked and how the resulting marks will be used to arrive at a final result and classification of an award. They are approved and published by the Faculty each year and include information on:

Conventions

- Marking conventions and scaling
- Verification and reconciliation of marks
- Qualitative marking criteria for different types of assessment
- Penalties for late or non-submission; for over-length work and departure from approved title/subject matter; for poor academic practice; for non-attendance
- Progression rules and classification conventions
- Use of viva voce examinations
- Re-sits
- Consideration of mitigating circumstances
- Details of examiners and rules on communicating with examiners

Rubrics

- type and structure of examination (e.g. in-person or online examination)
- submission instructions
- weightings of paper
- time allowed
- instructions on the use of dictionaries and other materials
- instructions on the use of different scripts
- instructions on word limits
- instructions on handwriting

The conventions and rubrics will be published on the 'Exams and Assessment Information' site on [Canvas](#) not less than one whole term before your examination takes place or, where assessment takes place in the first term of a course, at the beginning of that term.

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

If there is any discrepancy in information, you should always follow the Examination Regulations and please contact the [Academic Administration team](#).

Examination Entry, In-person and Online Examinations

You will enter for examinations through your College. It is your responsibility to ensure that you are entered for the correct number of papers and correct options, but you can speak to your College's academic office or the Asian and Middle Eastern Studies [Academic Administration team](#) if you are unsure about what these are. Your timetable will be available approximately five weeks before your first exam. Please refer to the Oxford Students website for full examination entry and alternative examination arrangements (www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams). Formal University examinations are normally sat in the Examination Schools or other approved locations.

In-person Examinations

Practical information and support for sitting in-person exams is provided on the Oxford students website (www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams/guidance).

Online Examinations

Online exams are taken in Inspira. You must familiarise yourself with the system prior to taking an online exam. There are a wide range of resources to help you on the Oxford Students website, including expectations regarding standards of behaviour and good academic practice for online open-book exams (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.

Candidate number

Your candidate number will be provided by your college you can also locate it on the Examination and Assessment Information page in Student Self Service or by looking on the top of your individual timetable. **Your candidate number is not your student number.**

Submissions via Inspira

Submissions are via the University's online assessment platform, [Inspira](#). 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).

An Inspira link and information will be sent by the Academic Administration office prior to the submission deadline.

Problems Completing Your Assessments

There are a number of University processes in place to help you if you find that illness or other personal circumstances are affecting your assessments or if you experience technical difficulties with an online exam or submission. Full information is available on the Oxford students website (www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams/problems-completing-your-assessment).

If you experience unexpected circumstances that may affect your performance, you must discuss your circumstances with your College first as any application to the Proctors will come from them. They can advise on the best course of action for your circumstances.

Mitigating circumstances notices to examiners (MCE)

The form is designed so that you can make the Board of Examiners aware of any problems that occurred before or during your exams, or in relation to your submitted coursework, that seriously

affected your performance. For further information about mitigating circumstances, please refer to the rubrics and to the [Oxford students website](#).

Vivas and Resits

Vivas are compulsory for this course unless candidates are excused by the examiners, please refer to the Examination Conventions and Rubrics when they are released. This is to enable your examiners to clarify any matters in your answers, and it gives you the opportunity to improve upon your performance, should that be necessary. When making any travel arrangements for the post-exam period, it is your responsibility to bear in mind attendance at the viva.

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

Infringements for Examinations and Submitted Assessments

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

Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies students should note that interpretation of the electronic word count is at the discretion of the Examiners, in view of the fact that most languages taught in the Faculty are not written in alphabetic scripts and the electronic word count may not be as accurate when taking these scripts into account.

Feedback on Learning and Assessment

Informal (Formative) Assessment

Informal assessment, also known as formative assessment, is provided by tutorial feedback and interaction with the Supervisor and/or tutor, by the discussion of prepared class-work or the results of class tests (especially for language classes), and by the Supervisor's termly report, which is discussed with the student in the Faculty and separately in the College.

Formal (Summative) Assessment

Formal assessment, also known as summative assessment, is provided by qualifying examinations in the first year and by one or more of written examinations, submitted essays, portfolio, and a thesis or dissertation at the end of the course.

Examiners' Reports and Previous Exam Papers (OXAM)

Examiners' reports from past exams are normally available from Hilary Term and will be uploaded to the 'Exams and Assessment Information' site on [Canvas](#). These reports give you an idea of how the exams were conducted and the performance of the cohort. Due to small class sizes for some degrees, it is not always possible to provide Examiners' reports for them. In these cases, please consult with your Course Director for some feedback.

Previous examination papers can be viewed on the Oxford Examination Papers Online website (<https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/portal/site/oxam>), you will need your SSO details to login.

Good Academic Practice and Avoiding Plagiarism

Plagiarism

The University's definition of plagiarism is:

Plagiarism is presenting someone else's work or ideas as your own, with or without their consent, by incorporating it into your work without full acknowledgement. All published and unpublished material, whether in manuscript, printed or electronic form, is covered under this definition. Plagiarism may be intentional or reckless, or unintentional. Under the regulations for examinations, intentional or reckless plagiarism is a disciplinary offence.

It is important that you take time to look at the University's guidance on plagiarism here: <http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills/plagiarism>.

You should refer to the University's guidance on referencing (<https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills/referencing>). If, after having done so, you are still unsure how to reference your work properly, you should contact your supervisor for guidance.

The University employs software applications to monitor and detect plagiarism in submitted examination work, both in terms of copying and collusion. It regularly monitors online essay banks, essay-writing services, and other potential sources of material.

TEACHING STAFF

- Dr [Young-hae Chi](#) – Course convenor for Modern Korean
- Mr [Shio-yun Kan](#) – Course convenor Modern Chinese
- Ms [Koari Nishizawa](#) – Course convenor for Modern Japanese

Complaints and Academic Appeals within the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies

The University, Humanities Division, and the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies all hope that provision made for students at all stages of their course of study will make the need for complaints (about that provision) or appeals (against the outcomes of any form of assessment) infrequent.

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

Many sources of advice are available from colleges, faculties/departments and bodies like the Counselling Service or the 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.

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

Complaints

If your concern or complaint relates to teaching or other provision made by the faculty/department, then you should raise it with the Director of Graduate Studies ([Edmund Herzig](#)) as appropriate.

Complaints about departmental facilities should be made to the Departmental administrator ([Trudi Pinkerton](#)). If you feel unable to approach one of those individuals, you may contact the Head of Administrator ([Thomas Hall](#)) or the Faculty Board Chair ([David Rechter](#)). The officer concerned will attempt to resolve your concern/complaint informally.

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

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

Academic appeals

An academic appeal is an appeal against the decision of an academic body (e.g. boards of examiners, transfer and confirmation decisions etc.), on grounds such as procedural error or evidence of bias. There is no right of appeal against academic judgement.

If you have any concerns about your assessment process or outcome it is advisable to discuss these first informally with your subject or college tutor, Senior Tutor, course director, director of studies, supervisor or college or departmental administrator as appropriate. They will be able to explain the assessment process that was undertaken and may be able to address your concerns. Queries must not be raised directly with the examiners.

If you still have concerns you can make a formal appeal to the Proctors who will consider appeals under the University Academic Appeals Procedure (<https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/complaints>).

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR THESIS WRITERS

These guidelines are for assistance only, they are not exam regulations. If your tutor or supervisor has given you alternative guidelines, then you should follow those instead.

Status of the thesis within the degree course

It is imperative to recognize that the writing of a thesis involves quite as much work as for a paper, and that the work differs from conventional study in shape and demand. The subject of your thesis may, but need not, overlap with a subject or period covered by one or more of your other papers, but you must not repeat material used in your thesis in any of your papers, and you will not be given credit for material extensively repeated.

Planning and Choice of Topic

You should discuss the topic of your thesis in the first instance with your course coordinator or supervisor. If your course coordinator or supervisor does not feel qualified to give detailed advice they will put you in touch with someone suitable to supervise a thesis in the chosen area. You should do so as early as possible:

- For undergraduates, Trinity Term, Year 1 is probably the best time for preliminary discussions. In no case should you leave the choice of a subject for your thesis later than the beginning of Michaelmas Term, Year 3. Print form from: <https://resources.orinst.ox.ac.uk/forms>
- MSt/MSc students should discuss the possible subject of your thesis in the first instance with your supervisor during the first four weeks of Michaelmas Term. Print form from: <https://resources.orinst.ox.ac.uk/forms>

- MPhil students should discuss the possible subject of your thesis with your supervisor before the end of Michaelmas Term, Year 1. Print form from:
<https://resources.orinst.ox.ac.uk/forms>

The Thesis Supervisor's Role

The supervisor of your thesis will assist in the choice of a topic and give initial advice on relevant sources and methods. They will advise on sources and presentation and assist with bibliographical advice; they will certainly expect to read draft chapters or sections. They may, but will not necessarily, read and comment on a complete first draft. But a thesis must be your own work.

Theses - Good and Indifferent

The hallmark of a good thesis is that it contains a consecutive argument or set of arguments on its topic. Apart from showing a sound grasp of the secondary literature on the subject and/or period and an awareness of the problems of the topic, you should deploy the evidence of the sources to support the elements in your general argument. It should be made clear how you have approached the subject, what conclusions you have reached and, if appropriate, how your approach and conclusions are related to the views of other scholars.

The work should be well-written and properly presented, with footnote references in orderly, consistent and unfussy shape and a sensibly-selected bibliography. Good presentation, in the experience of many examiners, is usually combined with high quality of analysis.

Conversely, careless or unclear writing, uncorrected mis-spellings, typing errors and plain misquotations often go with an uncertain or myopic focus on the subject.

Authors sometimes become so interested in their topic that they overlook the need to provide at least a brief introduction to it and to set it in its broader historical context or contexts. (An introductory section to a thesis may often usefully include a survey of the existing literature on a topic and 'pointers' to its particular interest and problems.)

While reading and research are being carried out, you should also be planning how to shape materials into an argument. Research, while sometimes frustrating, is intensely stimulating; it can also become a beguiling end in itself. Laboriously collected materials are worthless unless they contribute to a coherent argument. For this reason, you should begin to plan the structure of your argument as early as possible; some plans may need to be discarded until the most feasible one has been found.

It is a reasonable assumption that writing the thesis will take longer than expected: a good thesis will certainly require more than one draft of parts if not of the whole. Plenty of time should be allowed for getting the final typed version into presentable form without disrupting work for other papers or revision.

Format of the Thesis

a. Length

Your thesis should not exceed the word limit given in the Exam Regulations (Grey Book) or in your course handbooks, including text and notes but excluding appendices and bibliography (see below).

b. Pagination

Pagination should run consecutively from beginning to end and include any appendices etc. Cross references should be to pages and not simply to any sectional divisions.

c. *Order of Contents*

After the title-page (N.B. This must bear your candidate number but not your name) there should normally be:

- i. A table of contents, showing, in sequence, with page numbers, the subdivisions of the thesis. Titles of chapters and appendices should be given; titles of subsections of chapters may be given.
- ii. A list of illustrations (if appropriate)
- iii. A list of tables (if appropriate)
- iv. A list of abbreviations, cue-titles, symbols etc.
- v. A brief introduction in which the examiners' attention is drawn to the aims and broad argument(s) of the work, and in which any relevant points about sources and obligations to the work of other scholars are made.
- vi. The thesis itself, divided into chapters. The chapters should have clear descriptive titles.
- vii. A conclusion, consisting of a few hundred words which summarize the findings and briefly explore their implications.
- viii. Any appendices (which are likely not to count towards the word limit)
- ix. A bibliography. This is essential, and should be sensibly selective, omitting nothing which has been important in the production of the thesis. Works which are not specifically mentioned in the text may be included, but it is not necessary to include everything that may have been read or consulted. Works should be listed alphabetically by surname of author.

d. *Footnotes, References, and Bibliography*

Footnotes (except for references) should be as few and as brief as possible: they count towards the overall word-limit. The practice of putting into footnotes information which cannot be digested in the text should be avoided. Notes should be printed, single-spaced, at the foot of the page. Footnote numbers should be superscript (not bracketed) and run in a continuous sequence through each chapter. In subject areas where standard abbreviations for much quoted books and periodicals are in common use, these abbreviations may be employed in text, footnotes, or bibliography; they should be listed separately after the table of contents.

When reference is given for a quotation or for a viewpoint or item of information, it must be precise. But judgment needs to be exercised as to when reference is required: statements of fact which no reader would question do not need to be supported by references.

It is recommended that references be given in footnotes by means of author's name and/or full or abbreviated title. For example: 'Beeston, Arabic Language, 72' or 'Beeston (1970), 72'. All works referred to in this way must be listed in full at the end of the text in alphabetical order by author's name. Your bibliography might take the following form; you do not have to follow exactly this format, but whichever you do adopt must be equally clear, precise and consistent.

- i. Books
Beeston, A.F.L., *The Arabic Language Today*, London, 1970.
or
Beeston, A.F.L (1970), *The Arabic Language Today*, London.
- ii. Contributions to Books

Beeston, A.F.L. 'Background topics', in A.F.L. Beeston, T.M. Johnstone, R.B. Serjeant, and G.R. Smith (eds), *Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period*, Cambridge, 1983, pp. 1-26.

or

Beeston, A.F.L. (1983), 'Background topics', in A.F.L. Beeston, T.M. Johnstone, R.B. Serjeant, and G.R. Smith (eds), *Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period*, Cambridge, pp. 1-26.

iii. Journal Articles

Beeston, A.F.L., 'A Sabean penal law', *Le Muséon* 64 (1951): 7-15.

or

Beeston, A.F.L. (1951), 'A Sabean penal law', *Le Muséon* 64: 7-15.

e. *Tables, Photographs, Maps, Graphs and Drawings*

You are encouraged to employ tables, illustrations and graphs on any occasion when an argument can be more clearly and elegantly expressed by their employment. If they are not your own work, their original source must be acknowledged.

These should be used only to convey essential data that cannot be elegantly subsumed within the body of the text. They are particularly appropriate for material which does not count within the word limit of the thesis, such as transcriptions of texts, or catalogues of data.

f. *Italics*

These should be used for: titles of books and periodicals; technical terms or phrases in languages other than English (but not for quotations in foreign languages); for abbreviations which are abbreviations of foreign words (e.g., loc. cit.). Most such abbreviations are best avoided altogether.

g. *Capitals*

These should be used as sparingly as possible. They should be used for institutions and corporate bodies when the name used is the official title or part of the official title.

h. *Emphasis.*

Avoid the use of bold, italics, underline, exclamation marks, etc. for emphasis. It's ***rude*** to shout!!!

i. *Spelling*

English not American spelling should be used, e.g. 'colour' not 'color'. When in doubt, consult the OED, not your spell-checker.

j. *Transliteration*

Transliteration must be systematic, and follow a standard scholarly method. You should consult your supervisor as to which system is most appropriate to your subject. One system is that adopted by the International Journal of Middle East Studies (IJMES).

k. *Submission*

The thesis must be typed double-spaced with margins not less than 2.5cm (1"). The gutter margin must be at least 3.5cm. It is recommended that you use 12-point type. Do not justify the text.

PROGRAMME AIMS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR MPhil COURSES OF STUDY AT ASIAN AND MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES

The MPhil is a degree awarded on the successful completion of a course of directed study leading to an examination, which is normally taken after two years; as part of their coursework students normally also submit a thesis, the regulations for which are specified under individual subject headings in the [Examination Regulations](#).

In addition to this the Asian and Middle Eastern Studies Board is jointly responsible for the MPhil in Late Antique and Byzantine Studies (with options in Arabic, Armenian and Syriac) and for the MPhil in Judaism and Christianity in the Graeco-Roman World. The MPhil is at the FHEQ level 7.

Students enter for the MPhil Qualifying and Final examinations through their College. Students who wish to defer taking the examination beyond the two years must apply for permission to the Asian and Middle Eastern Studies Board.

The MPhil is available in the following subjects:

- Buddhist Studies
- Classical Indian Religion
- Cuneiform Studies
- Eastern Christian Studies
- Egyptology
- Islamic Art and Architecture
- Islamic Studies and History
- Jewish Studies
- Jewish Studies in the Graeco-Roman Period
- Modern Middle Eastern Studies
- Tibetan and Himalayan Studies
- Traditional East Asia

Educational Aims of the Programme

The programme aims to enable its students to:

- Develop the practice of analytical enquiry;
- Achieve a high level of competence in a relevant language where a study of language is part of the course;
- Achieve a good level of competence in the textual and historical analysis of texts in the relevant language;
- Gain a wide-ranging critical knowledge of relevant secondary literature and of current developments in the field;
- Reflect on relevant issues of method;
- Develop skills in written and oral communication, including sustained argument, independent thought and lucid structure and content;
- Develop the ability to identify, understand and apply key concepts and principles
- Where appropriate, prepare students for further research in the field.

Assessment

Formative assessment is provided by tutorial feedback and interaction with the Supervisor and/or tutor, by the discussion of prepared class-work, and by the Supervisor's termly report, which is discussed with the student in the Faculty and separately in the College

Summative assessment is provided at the end of the course by written examinations, submitted essays, portfolio, a thesis and *viva voce*, depending on the course.

Programme Outcomes

A. Knowledge and understanding

On completion of the course students will have:

- Acquired relevant linguistic and textual knowledge;
- Acquired some specialist knowledge of relevant primary and secondary literature;
- Gained enhanced understanding of how primary evidence is employed in philological, textual, historical and literary analysis and argument.

Related Teaching/Learning Methods and Strategies

The main learning strategy is that a student should practise the relevant skills under close supervision, receive constant feedback, and have the chance to see the same skills practised by acknowledged experts in a manner which can be emulated. The methods used to achieve this aim include:

- Language and/or text-reading classes, for which students are expected to prepare
- Lectures
- Seminars with peers and senior academics
- Tutorials (individual) for which students prepare a substantial piece of written work for discussion with their tutor(s)
- Museum classes (small-group), held in the Ashmolean Museum and designed around object handling – for Egyptology

B. Skills and other attributes

1. Intellectual Skills

The ability to:

- Exercise critical judgement and undertake sophisticated analysis
- Argue clearly, relevantly and persuasively
- Approach problems with creativity and imagination
- Develop the exercise of independence of mind, and a readiness to challenge and criticize accepted opinion

Teaching/Learning Methods and Strategies

As above.

Assessment

As above.

2. Practical Skills

All practical skills acquired are also transferable skills; see below.

3. Transferable Skills

The ability to:

- Find information, organise and deploy it;
- Use such information critically and analytically;
- Consider and solve complex problems with sensitivity to alternative traditions;
- Work well independently, with a strong sense of self-direction, but also with the ability to work constructively in co-operation with others;
- Effectively structure and communicate ideas in a variety of written and oral formats;
- Plan and organise the use of time effectively, and be able to work under pressure to deadlines;
- Make appropriate use of language skills;
- Handwrite in non-Roman script.

Teaching/Learning Methods and Strategies/Assessment

Since all these skills are essential elements of the course, they are taught and assessed in the same ways as at A above.

Assessment

Formative assessment is provided by tutorial feedback and interaction with the Supervisor and/or tutor, by the discussion of prepared class-work, and by the Supervisor's termly report, which is discussed with the student in the Faculty and separately in the College.

Summative assessment is provided by a qualifying examination in the first year and at the end of the course by written examinations, submitted essays, portfolio and a thesis, depending on the course.