DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

DPhil in Sociology

Student Handbook: 2026-27

1. Foreword

1.1 Statement of coverage

This handbook applies to students commencing the DPhil in Sociology in Michaelmas 2026. It is intended as a practical guide to the programme and should be read alongside the University's Examination Regulations and other University guidance. Information may differ for students who commenced in earlier years. The information in this handbook may be different for students starting in other years.

1.2 Version

Version	Publication date	Summary of changes
1.0	07 October 2026	Initial publication

1.3 Disclaimer

The Examination Regulations relating to this course are available at Research Degrees in Sociology Examination Regulations. If there is a conflict between information in this handbook and the Examination Regulations then students should follow the Examination Regulations. If students have any concerns please contact the Graduate Studies Office: graduate-studies@sociology.ox.ac.uk.

The information in this handbook is accurate as of 07 October 2026, however it may be necessary for changes to be made in certain circumstances, as explained at www.graduate.ox.ac.uk/coursechanges. 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.

Contents

1. Foreword 2
1.1 Statement of coverage 2
1.2 Version 2
1.3 Disclaimer 2
1.4 Welcome from the Course Director 5
1.5 Helpful links 6
1.6 Useful Department contacts 7
1.7 Location 9
1.8 Term dates 9
1.9 Feedback on this handbook 9
2 The course content and structure 10
2.1 Overview 10
2.2 Course aims and intended learning outcomes 10
2.3 Course milestones 10
3 Training and workshops 12
3.1 Probationer Research Student (PRS) workshop 12
3.2 Research Integrity training 12
3.3 Using generative AI in doctoral research 13
3.4 Research Skills training 14
3.5 Skills Review 15
3.6 Developing teaching skills 16
4 Transfer of Status 17
4.1 Purpose and overview 17
4.2 Applying 17
4.3 Assessment process 19
4.4 Success criteria 20
4.5 Outcomes 21
4.6 Deferral 22
5 Confirmation of Status 23
5.1 Purpose and overview 23
5.2 Applying 24
5.3 Assessment process 25
5.4 Success criteria 26
5.5 Outcomes 27
5.6 Deferral 28

6 DPhil thesis 29
6.1 Overview 29
6.2 Published or submitted papers 30
6.3 Research Ethics, fieldwork, travel and data protection 30
6.4 Co-authored work and supporting forms 33
6.5 Submission 33
6.6 Good academic practice and avoiding plagiarism 34
7 DPhil examination 38
7.1 Appointment of examiners 38
7.2 Examination arrangements 38
7.3 Following the DPhil examination 39
8 Skills and learning development 43
8.1 Academic progress 43
8.2 Language learning and upskilling 44
8.3 Opportunities to engage in the Department's research community 44
8.4 Employability and career information and advice 45
9 Student representation, evaluation and feedback 46
9.1 Department representation 46
9.2 Divisional and University representation 47
9.3 Opportunities to provide evaluation and feedback 47
10 Student life and support 48
10.1 Who to contact for help 48
10.2 Complaints and appeals 49
10.3 Policies and regulations 49
10.4 Fees 50
10.5 Residency requirements 50
10.6 Suspension of status 51
11 Facilities 52
11.1 Social spaces and facilities 52
11.2 Workspace 52
11.3 Libraries 52
11.4 IT 52
12 Sociology glossary 53
Annexe A: Guidance on Generative Artificial Intelligence Use 55
Annexe B: AI Declaration 57

1.4 Welcome from the Course Director

Welcome to the Department of Sociology and to the DPhil programme in Sociology at Oxford.

The DPhil is an opportunity to pursue a substantial piece of independent research and to help you transition from being a consumer to a producer of research. Oxford Sociology has a strong analytical, empirical and comparative orientation. The Department encompasses a broad range of substantive and theoretical interests, spanning areas such as social inequality and stratification, demography and the life course, family, political sociology, gender, social movements, ethnicity and migration. Our research also draws on a range of methodological approaches, including quantitative, qualitative and computational. We hope that this breadth will provide opportunities to encounter ideas and approaches across the discipline, which will both enrich your project and deepen expertise of the field.

Doctoral study is different from your previous taught degrees. Much of your work will be self-directed and over the course of the DPhil you will develop increasing independence in carrying out research. At the same time, you will not be doing this work alone, but as a part of an intellectual community who will help you develop as a scholar. Your supervisors, faculty, fellow DPhil students, administrative colleagues, as well as the wider departmental community are all important sources of intellectual exchange, advice and support. We encourage you to participate fully in the life of the Department, including its seminars, workshops and other events.

This handbook is intended to guide you through the DPhil programme and to provide a point of reference for the academic and practical matters you are likely to encounter during your studies. It sets out the principal requirements and milestones for your degree, as well as other information about supervision, training, and sources of advice and support available to you.

The handbook should be read alongside relevant University regulations and guidance, and the information provided to you by your college. Please take time to familiarise yourself with these documents. Inevitably, no handbook will cover every circumstance. If you are unsure about a requirement or procedure, or encounter specific difficulties during your DPhil, please ask. Your supervisors, DGS and graduate studies team are here to advise you. We also welcome feedback on potential improvements to the handbook.

We very much hope your time in Oxford Sociology will be productive and fulfilling, and we look forward to your contribution to the intellectual and social life of the Department.

Professor Ridhi Kashyap
Director of Graduate Studies

1.5 Helpful links

Canvas
The main source of current departmental information, including course materials, assessment information and announcements. Access requires University single sign-on. Most pertinently, Canvas incorporates information on examination conventions and the course timetable, the latter of which is also circulated by email before the start of each term.

Inspera
The University's platform for submitting summative assessments and, where applicable, taking online examinations. Students should also consult the University's guidance on coursework submissions and examinations in Inspera.

Oxford Students website
University-wide information and guidance for current students, including information about examinations, fees, welfare and academic procedures.

University Student Handbook
An overview of the University's principal policies, procedures and services for students. Colleges also often provide a handbook relevant to the student's college.

1.6 Useful Department contacts

Academic matters	**Director of Graduate Studies** Professor Ridhi Kashyap ridhi.kashyap@nuffield.ox.ac.uk **Head of Department** Professor Heather Hamill heather.hamill@sociology.ox.ac.uk
Business of the Graduate Studies Committee (GSC)	**Graduate Studies Officer** Adrian Wilson graduate-studies@sociology.ox.ac.uk
Research matters including ethical approval	**Research Facilitator** Natalie Hargrave research@sociology.ox.ac.uk / DREC@sociology.ox.ac.uk
Departmental facilities (incl. room bookings)	**Senior Facilities Support Assistant** Scott Matthews reception@sociology.ox.ac.uk
Computing and IT	**Sociology IT** itsg-support@sociology.ox.ac.uk
Change of supervisor	**Director of Graduate Studies** Professor Ridhi Kashyap ridhi.kashyap@nuffield.ox.ac.uk **Graduate Studies Officer** Adrian Wilson graduate-studies@sociology.ox.ac.uk
Communications (including website) and Events	**Communications and Events Manager** Laurel Millen-Quinn Comms@sociology.ox.ac.uk
Course student representatives	*To be confirmed*
Room bookings	**Senior Facilities Support Assistant** Scott Matthews reception@sociology.ox.ac.uk **Graduate Studies Administrative Assistant** Roanne Hyde graduate-studies@sociology.ox.ac.uk

Disability support	**Disability Lead** Professor Ridhi Kashyap ridhi.kashyap@nuffield.ox.ac.uk **Disability Coordinator** Adrian Wilson graduate-studies@sociology.ox.ac.uk

Every college has their own system of support for students. Please refer to the relevant college handbook or website for more information on who to contact and what support is available.

Details of support available more widely within the University are available from the Oxford Students website, including in relation to mental and physical health and disability.

1.7 Location

The Department of Sociology is based at 42–43 Park End Street, Oxford, OX1 1JD. The building has step-free access via the main entrance, with a powered secure door and intercom to reception. A platform lift provides access between the two floors, and wheelchair-accessible toilets are available on both floors. Hearing support systems are also available in a number of Departmental spaces.

Further information about accessibility, including entrance arrangements, parking and facilities within the building, is available through the University of Oxford Access Guide for 42–43 Park End Street. Students with particular access requirements are encouraged to contact the Department if they have any questions or require additional arrangements.

1.8 Term dates

Oxford term dates for the 2026-27 academic year:

- **Michaelmas term:** Sunday 11 October to Saturday 5 December
- **Hilary term:** Sunday 17 January to Saturday 13 March
- **Trinity term:** Sunday 25 April to Saturday 19 June

1.9 Feedback on this handbook

We welcome any feedback, corrections and suggestions for improving this handbook. Please send any feedback to the Graduate Studies Office at graduate-studies@sociology.ox.ac.uk.

2 The course content and structure

2.1 Overview

The DPhil in Sociology is a full-time, research-based degree at FHEQ Level 8 that is typically completed in three to four years. It is examined by a thesis, prepared under guidance of one or two academic supervisors.

The DPhil programme is designed to develop students for academic and research and other careers. Students develop their skills through independent research, supervision, and participation in Departmental workshops and seminars. They also benefit from the wider intellectual life at Oxford, which provide opportunities to broaden their knowledge and engage with wider sociological debates.

DPhil students are part of a research environment distinguished by a strong tradition of rigorous empirical sociology. They are exposed to the work of leading scholars in the Department, as well as the many visiting researchers who contribute to the University each year.

Students who successfully complete the DPhil successfully will have developed advanced research, analytical and writing skills that can support careers in universities in the UK and internationally, as well as to research-intensive jobs in government, international organisations, NGOs and the private sector.

2.2 Course aims and intended learning outcomes

The main aim of the DPhil programme is the production of a thesis. To be able to award the DPhil, examiners must be able to certify in their report that:

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

Examiners should bear in mind that their judgement of the substantial significance of the work, and the extent of the candidate's contribution to knowledge or understanding of the relevant field of learning, should reflect what may be reasonably expected of a capable and diligent student after three years of full-time (or part-time equivalent) study.

2.3 Course milestones

A number of milestones are in place to ensure that students make steady progress towards completion of the DPhil. The expected normal timetable is as follows:

- Admission as a Probationer Research Student (PRS)
    - At the beginning of the student's studies at Oxford
- Application for Transfer of Status to DPhil status

    - To be submitted by Monday of Week 4 of Trinity term in the first year
- Application for Confirmation of DPhil status
    - To be submitted by Friday of Week 6 of their sixth term
    - This can be extended to seventh term for those intending to conduct substantial fieldwork
- Submission of DPhil thesis
    - To be submitted by the end of the third year

The Departmental Graduate Studies Committee encourages research students to follow this timetable for Transfer and Confirmation of Status, as well as submission of the DPhil thesis.

Circumstances may make this timetable inappropriate in individual cases, and the Examination Regulations do not require it. The University nevertheless aims to receive DPhil theses by the end of the fourth year. If more than 12 terms are needed to complete and submit the DPhil thesis, students must apply to the Graduate Studies Committee for an extension of time. The University also applies strict conditions to any intermission of status, including the requirement for supporting medical evidence where appropriate.

Schedule

The table below shows the compulsory and recommended elements of the DPhil Sociology. Further descriptions are provided in the Training and Workshops section of the handbook.

Year	Event	Priority
1	PRS workshops	Compulsory
1	Skills training courses	Compulsory
1	Research Integrity training	Compulsory
1	Transfer of Status	Compulsory
1	DPhil conference participation	Recommended
2	Professional Development workshops	Compulsory
2	DPhil conference participation	Compulsory
2	Skills training courses	Recommended
2	Advanced Methods short courses	Recommended
2	Confirmation of Status	Recommended
3	Confirmation of Status (if not achieved sooner)	Compulsory
3	DPhil conference presentation	Compulsory
3	Engage with Careers Services	Recommended
3	DPhil thesis submission	Recommended as soon as possible

In addition to the above, students are expected to engage with the following seminar series throughout their degree:

- Department of Sociology Seminar series
- Nuffield College Sociology Seminar series

3 Training and workshops

3.1 Probationer Research Student (PRS) workshop

Convenors: Professor Ridhi Kashyap, Dr Lynn Schneider and Dr Pablo Geraldo

Aims

The workshop supports first-year doctoral students at the start of their DPhil. It provides a forum in which students can present and actively discuss their research proposals, the Transfer of Status process, early written work, and broader professional aspects of academic life. It also helps students develop the skills needed to give, receive and use constructive feedback effectively.

Preparation and assignments

The seminars take place across the first two terms. All PRS students are required to participate. A detailed schedule will be issued at the start of the academic year. The first major assignment, early in Michaelmas term, is a presentation of the proposed doctoral research project. Discussion of methodology and final presentations will take place in Hilary term.

Class proceedings

Some sessions will be led by faculty, while others centre on student presentations and discussion.

Attendance and participation

Attendance and active participation are essential. Students are expected to have read the assigned material in advance and, where required, prepare written comments for discussion. If a student is unable to attend a session, the convenor should be informed in advance.

3.2 Research Integrity training

The Research Degrees Panel of Education Committee requires all postgraduate research students admitted from Michaelmas term 2021 onwards to complete the training course successfully and provide evidence of completion when applying for Transfer of Status. The training must also be completed before Confirmation of DPhil status can be approved, and the certificate must be submitted with the Confirmation application unless it has already been provided at Transfer of Status.

See more details in Section 6.3, Ethical approval through Worktribe.

3.3 Using generative AI in doctoral research

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) tools can support aspects of doctoral research when used appropriately. The University supports the safe and productive use of these tools, subject to its requirements for research integrity, academic conduct, research ethics, information security and data protection.

As a doctoral researcher, you are responsible for the intellectual content, integrity and originality of your research. Critical academic judgement must remain your own. GenAI may assist parts of the research process, but it should not replace the intellectual work involved in developing and justifying research questions, making substantive methodological decisions, critically evaluating evidence, interpreting findings, or developing the arguments and conclusions of the thesis.

You should critically evaluate all GenAI outputs. GenAI tools can produce inaccurate or fabricated information and references and may reproduce biases in their underlying data. Information obtained through GenAI should therefore be checked against reliable sources. AI-generated summaries should not replace reading and critically engaging with the original academic literature.

All milestone and thesis submissions in the Sociology Department require an GenAI declaration statement (Annexe B). This includes noting the specific tools and models that were used, as well as specific discussion of substantive uses of GenAI. If GenAI tools were not used for the submission, then this should also be declared. Additional information can be found in Annexe A with the AI Declaration for all milestone assessment submissions in Annexe B.

3.3.1 Substantive use of GenAI

The University requires substantive use of stand-alone GenAI tools in research to be declared. Substantive use includes uses such as:

- interpreting or analysing data, texts, audio or images;
- undertaking literature reviews or identifying research gaps;
- formulating research aims or developing hypotheses;
- using GenAI to generate or develop ideas;
- generating code or synthetic data;
- using GenAI for transcription where this is undertaken to save time rather than as an accessibility measure; and
- producing documents from other people's work, transcripts or recordings.

Not every use of AI constitutes substantive use. The University's guidance gives examples of exclusions, including some uses for accessibility, formatting and language support. If you are unsure whether a proposed use is substantive, discuss it with your supervisor.

3.3.2 Transparency and reproducibility

You should keep an appropriate record of substantive GenAI use throughout your research and discuss its use with your supervisor. Where GenAI forms part of your research methods,

its use should be described sufficiently clearly to allow the research process to be understood and, where possible, reproduced.

You remain responsible for checking and validating any AI-assisted research output, including code, data processing, transcription, analysis and references.

3.3.3 Research data, ethics and confidentiality

Particular care must be taken when using GenAI with research data. You must comply with the University's requirements for research ethics, information security, data protection, confidentiality, intellectual property and any conditions attached to the data you are using.

Personal, sensitive, confidential or unpublished research material must not be uploaded to third-party AI tools where this would breach these requirements. Where GenAI will be used to process primary research data, including interview or survey data, this use should be considered as part of the ethical review of the research.

Any proposed use of GenAI with data provided by a third party must also comply with the conditions under which those data were supplied.

3.4 Research Skills training

Supervisors will discuss initial training requirements with their new students. There is a wide range of training opportunities for students within and beyond the Department to get involved with.

During their first term, students should review their training need with their supervisor. A range of short courses is available in Oxford and elsewhere. Please consult Social Sciences Division website and the National Centre for Research Methods website for an overview of training opportunities. Training needs should be reported in the Michaelmas term Graduate Supervision Reporting (GSR) report, and skills training should be reviewed annually.

Training is also provided by the wider University such as the Careers Service, IT Services and the Bodleian Libraries.

3.4.1 Research skills training within the Department

Advanced Quantitative Methods

PRS students who have not previously received similar training are encouraged to attend the Advanced Quantitative Methods (AQM) course and complete the coursework. AQM is taught in Hilary term. Students wishing to participate should consult both their supervisor and the AQM course provider. Further information is available in the MSc Sociology Student Handbook on Canvas and on the Department's website. Depending on the general requirements of the DPhil in Sociology, or on the specific nature of the thesis, students may also be asked to audit core taught-course papers, without entering them for examination.

Professional Development workshops

The Department offers a series of professional development workshops, usually in Hilary term, for DPhil Sociology students in their second year. Attendance is compulsory. Students

who are conducting fieldwork during that term will normally be required to attend in their third year. More advanced doctoral students are also welcome to attend.

Workshop topics vary from year to year, but may include:

- Managing an academic career
- The job market
- Publishing a thesis as a book
- Publishing journal articles
- Reviewing for journals
- Job talks and interviews
- Careers in the public and private sectors

A schedule of the workshops will be circulated at the start of the relevant Hilary term. The series is coordinated by the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS).

Departmental seminars

Departmental seminars are held during term throughout the year at 12:45 on Mondays. Further details are available on the Department's Events page. Students are also strongly encouraged to attend the Nuffield College Sociology Seminars, details of which are available on the Nuffield College Events and Seminars page.

Departmental DPhil conference

The Departmental DPhil conference is held annually, usually in Michaelmas term. DPhil students present their work, comment on each other's papers and receive feedback.

All doctoral students are expected to participate at least twice. In their second year, students attend the conference and provide feedback on their peers' presentations. In their third year, students present one of the papers or chapters prepared for Confirmation of Status.

Participation is a compulsory part of the DPhil Sociology programme. Other DPhil students are also encouraged to attend, as the conference provides an opportunity to learn about other doctoral work in sociology and is often interesting and informative.

3.5 Skills Review

Skills review is an ongoing part of doctoral training. At each stage of the DPhil, students should consider their development as researchers and professionals, and identify any further training that would be useful. Working with their supervisor, students will agree a bespoke training and development plan each year.

Students should record their training needs and any completed training in Graduate Supervision Reporting (GSR). Reviews should be uploaded regularly, and at least once a year. Students should also use the free-text boxes in GSR to note training undertaken and any changes in their development needs, so that a record is maintained over time.

Skills Review is an ongoing and iterative process:

- **Self-evaluation:** students complete or update their Skills Review in GSR.
- **Skills Review meeting**: in Michaelmas term, the student and supervisor meet to discuss skills, training needs and any gaps to be addressed, and agree a plan of action.
- **Recording and training:** the agreed actions and any completed training are recorded in GSR.
- **Follow-up:** the plan of action and progress are discussed again at Skills Reviews meetings in Hilary and Trinity terms, and the outcomes are recorded in GSR.

3.6 Developing teaching skills

In the second or third year of the DPhil, students may wish to take the Introduction to Learning and Teaching at Oxford (ILTO) seminars in Hilary term, which introduces teaching in higher education.

Students who have completed ILTO and are undertaking teaching may then register for the Centre for Teaching and Learning's Advancing Teaching and Learning (ATL) accredited programme. This one-term seminar series will allow students to complete a few formative tasks, and submit a portfolio. On passing the ATL students will become an Associate Fellow of the Higher Education Academy.

4 Transfer of Status

4.1 Purpose and overview

Transfer of Status is the first formal milestone of the DPhil. It is intended to confirm that the student is making satisfactory progress and that the proposed thesis is viable in terms of topic, method and timetable.

The formal regulations are set out in the Examination Regulations and further information is also available in the Education Committee Policy and Guidance on Research Degrees.

The transfer process provides the opportunity for the student to discuss their work with two independent members of staff and to receive feedback. Broadly, the assessment should show a plan for the thesis that locates the research in the context of earlier work in the field, sets out the questions, hypotheses or issues on which it will focus, and describes and explains the methods by which these will be answered, tested or addressed.

The assessment procedures are intended to remove the risk of failure and to reduce the risk of referral as far as possible, and must therefore be as rigorous as is necessary to achieve this.

4.1.1 Timing

The Examination Regulations state that PRS status can be held for no longer than four terms. The departmental Graduate Studies Committee requires submitting for Transfer of Status by Monday of Week 4 in Trinity term of the first year (second year for part-time DPhil students).

4.2 Applying

Applications for Transfer of Status should be made online via the Transfer of Status form accessible in the My Student Record tab of Student Self Service. The form is also accessible via the Graduate Forms webpage. Students must complete the form online and upload the required supporting information (see below).

On submission, applications for Transfer of Status will be considered by supervisors, the point at which assessors are suggested. The application will then be considered by the student's college and the Director of Graduate Studies.

Students applying for Transfer of Status will be required to submit the following:

- Thesis title and outline
- Research proposal (5,000-7,000 words), consisting of the following:
    - Short description of the project, including the research question
    - Brief account of the relevant literature
    - Account of how the research question and data analysis fit into it
    - Description of the research design and associated methods
    - Justification of the choice of format for the thesis (traditional monograph, set of papers tied together with an introduction and conclusion, i.e. "integrated")
        - Candidates submitting an integrated thesis should also submit a GSO.31 form when applying for Transfer of Status (available here).
- Written work (5,000-7,000 words), consisting of the following:
    - Draft of a first chapter/paper
    - Context of the project within wider literature
    - Empirical analysis, if applicable
- Bibliography
- Timetable of completion
- Evidence of participation in PRS and departmental seminars
- Evidence of personal and professional development completed during time as a PRS
- Evidence of engagement with the ethics approval process. This may be either:
    - Confirmation of approval from Worktribe, showing that a Favourable Opinion has been provided
    - Evidence that the application in Worktribe is under review
    - Confirmation from Worktribe that ethics approval is not required
- Evidence of completed Research Integrity training
- Completion and sign-off of Travel and Fieldwork Risk Assessment form
- Statement(s) of the contribution of each co-author, signed by all co-authors and supervisor, if applicable
- AI declaration statement (Annexe B)

The combined length of the research proposal and written work should be at least 10,000 words, and no longer than 14,000 words.

Departmental research compliance checkpoint
The Department requires students who will undertake research requiring ethical review and/or fieldwork to have completed and submitted the relevant ethics application and fieldwork risk assessment before the Transfer of Status interview. Where neither requirement applies, this should be confirmed with the supervisor and recorded through the Department's compliance process. This checkpoint is separate from the academic criteria used to determine the outcome of Transfer of Status. Students must not begin data collection or fieldwork until all required approvals are in place.

4.2.1 Use of GenAI in Transfer of Status submissions

Transfer of Status submissions must reflect your own research, reasoning and academic judgement. Any substantive use of GenAI in the research or preparation of material submitted for Transfer must be declared in accordance with University and Departmental requirements. If GenAI is not used, this also should be declared. Additional information can be found in Annexe A with the AI Declaration for all assessment submissions in Annexe B.

You should be able to explain and defend the research decisions, methods, analysis and arguments presented in your submission during the Transfer assessment interview.

4.3 Assessment process

Students, in consultation with their supervisor(s), will nominate two assessors to read the transfer application and interview the candidate. If a student is referred for a second attempt, the same assessors will normally be used again.

The assessors must be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies on behalf of the Graduate Studies Committee, and neither assessor may be the student's supervisor. Assessors will normally be members of the University of Oxford; external assessors will be appointed only in exceptional circumstances. Where appropriate, the same assessor may be used for both Transfer and Confirmation of Status, and may also serve as the internal examiner for the DPhil viva voce.

Transfer assessments are normally held in person in Oxford. Students should normally expect to be interviewed within six weeks of submitting their application, although this may take longer during vacation periods. The interview is a formal requirement, but it is not an official examination or viva, and sub fusc is not worn. The assessors will write a joint report and submit their recommendations to the Graduate Studies Committee. Students should normally receive the outcome within three weeks of the interview, although this may also take longer during vacation periods.

4.3.1 Instructions to Assessors

Once assessors are provided access to the student's uploaded work on eVision, they should contact students as soon as reasonably possible to arrange the interview. If there is a problem at the time of application, the student should inform the Graduate Studies Officer.

Assessors should judge whether the student can carry out advanced research, and whether the proposed thesis topic and approach are suitable for transfer to DPhil status. They should assess the application against the criteria for success set out below and aim to provide constructive criticism and advice that will help the student strengthen the project. Dismissive or aggressive remarks are not appropriate.

The written work will usually reflect only three terms' work and the project will still be at an early stage. Omissions, weaker arguments or missing perspectives are not necessarily fatal unless they suggest that the student is unlikely to reach the required standard. The proposal and thesis structure do not need to be fully finalised, but the student should have a clear sense of the research questions and how they may be answered.

The joint assessors' report should be 1-2 pages long. It should provide a record of the advice given at this stage and an indication of the student's progress. It should normally include a summary of the interview, feedback on the written work, comments on the strengths, any concerns about progress and suggestions for further development. For non-native English speakers, it should also comment on the student's ability to present and defend the work in English.

Any significant difference of opinion between assessors will be resolved by the DGS, in consultation with the assessors and supervisors.

4.4 Success criteria

For Transfer of Status to be approved, the student's proposed thesis must be viable in terms of topic and treatment, and the written work and interview must demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of the subject. The student must also be competent to complete and present their thesis in English. The application will be judged against the following criteria:

- Completion of all required training
- Competence in written and spoken English
- Realistic and focused research aims
- Evidence of wide reading and critical analysis
- Appropriate methodology and research techniques
- Clear acknowledgement of the project's limitations
- A clear sense of how the work will develop into a DPhil
- A realistic timetable for the research
- Progression of a coherent argument
- A scholarly and rigorous approach to the research
- Compliance with the Division's ethical standards
- A strong overall understanding of the subject
- Adequate university facilities, including supervision, to support the work
- The ability to carry out advanced research
- A schedule of work that can be completed within three, or at most four, years of the DPhil

The specific criteria that the assessors are asked to confirm include the following:

- They have considered the candidate's thesis proposal, research schedule, and draft chapter
- They have interviewed the candidate
- The student is competent to complete and present a thesis in English
- The proposed thesis topic and approach are viable for a DPhil
- The draft chapter and interview show a good understanding of the subject
- The proposed schedule of work is viable and can, in principle, be completed within three, or at most four, years from initial registration as PRS

4.5 Outcomes

The assessors will recommend one of five outcomes, which must be considered and approved by the Graduate Studies Committee (excluding option (ii)):

i. **Successful transfer** – Accompanied by suggestions and advice for future progress.

ii. **Revision of application** – The assessors may request further minor clarifications before making a first recommendation. In such cases it should be possible to complete the additional work within one month of the assessment.

iii. **Referral for a second attempt at transfer** – This should normally take place within one term of the first attempt and will usually involve the same assessors. A new application form must be completed and an interview held. If the first attempt takes place in the fourth term of PRS status or later, a one-term extension of PRS status is automatically granted to allow the second attempt; this does not affect the total time permitted for DPhil registration. The assessors should set out clearly what is needed to strengthen the application before resubmission, which may include further written work, additional evidence, and, where appropriate, an additional assessor.

    Referral may simply represent attempts to ensure that the student's work is enhanced so that it is set on the best possible course, and should not necessarily be seen as a failure.

iv. **Transfer to the MLitt** – Although the work presented was not suitable for transfer to DPhil status, nonetheless, the assessors felt it was strong enough for the lower award which is a less demanding and shorter time-scale research degree.

v. **Reject the application** – The assessors cannot recommend transfer to either DPhil status or the lower award.

At the first attempt at transfer only options (i)-(iv) should normally be chosen. At the second attempt, options (i), (ii), (iv) or (v) should be considered.

Only in exceptional circumstances may a third attempt at transfer be made, and this would require the support of the Graduate Studies Committee and approval by the University's Education Committee.

If a student is transferred to the lower degree of MLitt at the first attempt, they may accept this or retain PRS status and make a second transfer application the following term. In exceptional cases, a further attempt at transfer to DPhil status may be permitted, provided sufficient time has elapsed, significant progress has been made, and the supervisor, College and Director of Graduate Studies support the application.

If the student does not transfer to DPhil status or the applicable lower degree after two attempts, PRS status will cease and the student's name will be removed from the Register of

Graduate Students. In such cases, informal counselling, usually involving the student's college, should form part of the process.

4.5.1 Feedback following assessment

Students will receive appropriate feedback on their Transfer assessment, including the assessors' recommendations and advice for the further development of their research. Where an application is referred or is otherwise unsuccessful, the feedback will identify the areas that require further work and, where a further application is permitted, what the student will need to demonstrate at the next assessment.

Students who wish to challenge a decision relating to Transfer of Status should refer to the University's academic appeals procedure. Further information is provided in Section 10.2.2, Appeals, of this handbook.

4.6 Deferral

If a student has not applied to transfer by the end of their fourth term, they must attend a formal academic review meeting with their supervisor(s) and the Director of Graduate Studies, or another member of academic staff. The meeting will review progress and set a timetable to ensure transfer is achieved within six terms, as required by the Examination Regulations. The student must also apply for a formal deferral of Transfer of Status for one or two further terms through Student Self Service; this will be considered by the supervisor and College, with the final decision made by the DGS.

Where a student is not ready to apply for Transfer within the required timeframe, they should discuss their circumstances with their supervisor and the Director of Graduate Studies at the earliest opportunity. Depending on the circumstances, other options may be more appropriate than deferral, including suspension of status, withdrawal from the programme or, where appropriate, transfer from full-time to part-time status.

Where the permitted period of deferral has been exhausted, a further deferral may be sought from the University's Education Committee **only** in exceptional circumstances. There is no guarantee that such an application will be approved, and one of the alternative options above may be more appropriate. Any application would normally follow a review of the student's circumstances by the Director of Graduate Studies and supervisor and would need to demonstrate a realistic prospect of the student making sufficient progress to pass Transfer if a further deferral were granted.

Students should contact the Graduate Studies Office for advice before making an application for deferral or considering alternative changes to their student status. Any extension to PRS status does not affect the overall time permitted for DPhil registration.

5 Confirmation of Status

5.1 Purpose and overview

The Confirmation of Status assesses the student's progress and the quality of the developing thesis through an interview with two assessors, other than the supervisor(s). It provides an indication of whether submission within a further three terms would be realistic if progress continues satisfactorily. It should not be taken to imply the eventual outcome of the thesis examination.

The assessment focuses on the progress of the research, the quality of the draft chapters, and the plan for completion. It is intended to confirm that the student is making appropriate progress towards submission within three, or at most four, years (or six to eight years for part-time students) and that the project remains of a manageable scope. It also gives the student the opportunity to receive independent feedback on the work and to address any weaknesses before final submission. The interview may also help prepare the student for the viva voce examination.

As with the Transfer of Status, the formal regulations are set out in the Examination Regulations and further information is also available in the Education Committee Policy and Guidance on Research Degrees.

5.1.1 Timing

The Examination Regulations state that students should apply for Confirmation of Status within nine terms of their admission as a PRS student. However, the Graduate Studies Committee recommends that students apply for Confirmation of Status by Friday of Week 6 of the sixth term for those not undertaking substantial fieldwork (twelfth term for part-time DPhil students), or by Friday of Week 6 of the seventh term for those doing fieldwork in their second year (fourteenth term for part-time students).

5.2 Applying

Applications for Confirmation of Status should be made online via the Transfer of Status form accessible in the My Student Record tab of Student Self Service. The form is also accessible via the Graduate Forms webpage. Students must complete the form online and upload the required supporting information (see below).

On submission, applications for Confirmation of Status will be considered by supervisors, the point at which assessors are suggested. The application will then be considered by the student's college and the Director of Graduate Studies.

Students applying for Confirmation of Status will be required to submit the following:

- Thesis title and abstract
- Thesis outline (2-3 paragraphs on each chapter)
    - This should justify the choice of thesis format, as in the Transfer
- Chapters conveying original findings
    - For theses of 3-4 chapters, student should submit two here, conveying original findings
    - For theses of more than four chapters, students should submit up to two-thirds of the substantive component of the thesis
    - Chapters must include a bibliography
- Timetable for completion
- Evidence of personal and professional development completed
- Evidence of engagement with the ethics approval process. This may be either:
    - Confirmation of approval from Worktribe, showing that a Favourable Opinion has been provided
    - Evidence that the application in Worktribe is under review
    - Confirmation from Worktribe that ethics approval is not required
- Evidence of completed Research Integrity training
- Completion and sign-off of Travel and Fieldwork Risk Assessment form
- Statement(s) of the contribution of each co-author, signed by all co-authors and supervisor, if applicable
- AI declaration statement (Annexe B)

The combined length of the above materials should not exceed 30,000 words.

5.2.1 Use of GenAI in Confirmation of Status submissions

Confirmation of Status submissions must reflect your own research, reasoning and academic judgement. Any substantive use of GenAI in the research or preparation of material submitted for Confirmation must be declared in accordance with University and Departmental requirements. If GenAI is not used, this also should be declared.

You should be able to explain and defend the research decisions, methods, analysis and arguments presented in your submission during the Confirmation assessment interview.

5.3 Assessment process

As with the Transfer of Status, students, in consultation with their supervisor(s), will nominate two assessors to read the transfer application and interview the candidate. If a student is referred for a second attempt, the same assessors will normally be used again.

The assessors must be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies on behalf of the Graduate Studies Committee, and neither assessor may be the student's supervisor. Assessors will normally be members of the University of Oxford; external assessors will be appointed only in exceptional circumstances. Where appropriate, the same assessor may be used for both Transfer and Confirmation of Status, and may also serve as the internal examiner for the DPhil viva voce.

Confirmation assessments are normally held in person in Oxford. Students should normally expect to be interviewed within six weeks of submitting their application, although this may take longer during vacation periods. The interview is a formal requirement, but it is not an official examination or viva, and sub fusc is not worn. The assessors will write a joint report and submit their recommendations to the Graduate Studies Committee. Students should normally receive the outcome within three weeks of the interview, although this may also take longer during vacation periods.

5.3.1 Instructions to Assessors

Once assessors are provided access to the student's uploaded work on eVision, they should contact students as soon as reasonably possible to arrange the interview. If there is a problem at the time of application, the student should inform the Graduate Studies Administrator.

An applicant for Confirmation of Status should be near to having a complete thesis plan, and the work submitted should read as near-complete. By contrast with Transfer of Status, omissions and missing perspectives are more serious at Confirmation stage. However, if the student is able to satisfy the assessors at interview that these issues can be addressed, they should not of themselves prevent confirmation of status. The work should be presented in scholarly form and should be broadly of the standard expected in a DPhil thesis at final examination, although it need not yet be complete in every detail.

Assessors should judge the application against the criteria for success set out below and aim to provide constructive criticism and advice that will help the student strengthen the project. Dismissive or aggressive remarks are not appropriate.

If it is unclear during the assessment how the research will be completed, or the proposal is over-large, the assessors may request a revised thesis outline or further written work before submitting the initial report.

The joint assessors' report should be 1-2 pages long. It should provide a record of the advice given at this stage and an indication of the student's progress. It should normally include a summary of the interview, feedback on the written work, comments on the strengths, any concerns about progress and suggestions for further development.

Assessors should consider the clarity of the research aims, chapter structure, timetable for completion, progress to date, and significance of the work in relation to the existing literature and field. They should also assess whether the written work is presented in a scholarly and lucid manner, and whether the student shows the capacity to make a significant and substantial contribution to the field. The student should demonstrate a systematic grasp of the relevant literature and research methods, and the ability to design, carry through and defend the thesis within three, or at most four, years. For non-native English speakers, the report should also indicate the assessors' view of the student's ability to present and defend the work in English.

Any significant difference of opinion between assessors will be resolved by the DGS, in consultation with the assessors and supervisors.

5.4 Success criteria

For Confirmation of Status to be approved, the student will need to be able to show that:

- Research already conducted shows promise of contributing to a thesis
- The work submitted for assessment is of the standard expected of a DPhil thesis
- The bulk of any fieldwork has been completed and the analysis is well developed
- The proposed schedule is viable and that the thesis can be completed within three, or at most four, years from admission
- They can present and defend their work in English

In addition, the assessors will judge the application against the following criteria:

- Evidence of wide reading and critical review of the literature
- A clear indication of how the research is being developed into a thesis
- Potential original contribution to the field of study
- Evidence of a progression of argument and logic throughout the thesis
- Evidence of a scholarly and lucid approach to the research issues
- A clear timetable for the completion of the research within three, or at most four years from admission
- The ability to write in clear and coherent manner, with due attention to presentation
- Competence in both written and spoken English
- The ability to articulate and defend the argument in the interview
- Presentation of the thesis at the DPhil conference
- The draft chapters are of the quality expected for a DPhil thesis

Assessors are asked to confirm that they:

- Have considered the candidate's thesis outline, research schedule, and two draft chapters
- Have interviewed the candidate
- Confirm the draft thesis chapters to be of a DPhil standard
- Deem the research schedule to be viable
- Have seen a co-authorship statement for each co-authored piece of work, and that each statement describes the contribution of the student clearly

5.5 Outcomes

The assessors will recommend one of five outcomes, which must be considered and approved by the Graduate Studies Committee (excluding option (ii)):

i. **Successful confirmation** – Accompanied by suggestions and advice for future progress.

ii. **Revision of application** – The assessors may request further minor clarifications before making a first recommendation. In such cases it should be possible to complete the additional work within one month of the assessment.

iii. **Referral for a second attempt at Confirmation of Status** — This should normally take place within one term of the first attempt and will usually involve the same assessors. A new application form must be completed and an interview held. If the first attempt takes place in the final term permitted, a one-term extension is automatically granted to allow the second attempt. This does not affect the total time permitted for DPhil registration; however, where the student has already been registered for twelve terms, the extension counts as one of the potential six terms of extension of time allowed under the general regulations. The assessors should set out clearly what is needed to strengthen the application before the second attempt. This may include further written work, additional evidence and, where appropriate, an additional assessor.

   Referral is intended to help ensure that the student's work is strengthened and set on the best possible course, and should not necessarily be seen as a failure. Although referral may be disappointing, it often provides useful guidance and the opportunity to make substantial improvements before the final thesis is submitted.

vi. **Transfer to MLitt** –Although the work presented was not suitable for transfer to DPhil status, nonetheless, the assessors felt it was strong enough for the lower award which is a less demanding and shorter time-scale research degree. In cases where transfer to a lower award is approved, if the student is already in their ninth term or beyond, a formal extension of time will also be needed to allow the student to stay on the graduate register for the lower degree, otherwise their status will lapse, and they will have to subsequently apply for reinstatement to the Register of Graduate Students

iv. **Reject the application** – The assessors cannot recommend confirmation of status, or transfer to the lower award. This exceptional outcome should only be used if the quality of the student's work has regressed to below the standard previously achieved for transfer of status.

At the first attempt at transfer only options (i)-(iv) should normally be chosen. At the second attempt, options (i), (ii), (iv) or (v) should be considered.

Only in exceptional circumstances may a third attempt at transfer be made, and this would require the support of the Graduate Studies Committee and approval by the University's Education Committee.

If a student fails to proceed through Confirmation, or through transfer to the applicable lower degree after two attempts, then his/her student status will lapse, and his/her name will be removed from the Register of Graduate Students. In such circumstances, informal counselling, often involving the student's college, should be an integral part of the procedures.

5.6 Deferral

If a student has not applied to transfer by the end of their ninth term, they must apply for a deferral of confirmation of status, otherwise their student status will lapse and their name will be removed from Graduate Register. It is possible to apply for a deferral of confirmation of status for up to three terms, as long as the total number of terms from admission as a graduate student does not exceed twelve.

Students who are considering applying for deferral to Confirmation of Status will be required to attend a formal academic review meeting with their supervisor(s) and the Director of Graduate Studies, or another member of academic staff. The meeting will review progress and set a timetable to ensure transfer is achieved within the proposed period of deferral. The student must also apply for a formal deferral of Transfer of Status for one or two further terms through Student Self Service; this will be considered by the supervisor and College, with the final decision made by the DGS.

The meeting will review progress and set a timetable to ensure transfer is achieved within six terms, as required by the Examination Regulations. The student must also apply for a formal deferral of Transfer of Status for one or two further terms through Student Self Service; this will be considered by the supervisor and College, with the final decision made by the DGS.

In exceptional cases, PRS status may be extended beyond six terms with approval from the University's Education Committee. Students should contact the Graduate Studies Office for guidance. Any extension to PRS status does not affect the overall time permitted for DPhil registration.

6 DPhil thesis

6.1 Overview

Completing the thesis is the final requirement for the DPhil. The DPhil thesis must represent the candidate's own original research and academic judgement. GenAI must not be treated as an author or co-author of the thesis.

Substantive use of GenAI in the research underpinning the thesis must be declared in accordance with University requirements. Where GenAI has formed part of the research methodology, its use and the steps taken to validate its outputs should also be described in the thesis where relevant. If GenAI was not used, this should also be declared.

The candidate remains responsible for the accuracy, originality and integrity of the thesis and must be able to defend the research, methods, analysis and conclusions at the viva.

The thesis can take one of two forms:

6.1.1 Book format

This follows the traditional thesis style, with a single study or set of studies presented as a single narrative in a monograph. The goal of this format is to eventually submit the thesis to a press as a book manuscript.

6.1.2 Articles/integrated format

This format can take two basic forms:

- The articles format includes a minimum of three related but separate articles that can stand alone but are presented together with a single introduction and conclusion.
- The integrated format also can take a format that includes a one or more articles and one or more conventional chapters, and also includes a single introduction, and conclusion.

The goal of this format is to eventually submit each of the thesis articles, individually, to journals. Normally each article would be between 7500 and 10000 words. Candidates should be aware that the inclusion of one or more articles which have already been accepted for publication or have been published, does not of itself constitute proof that the work is of sufficient quality or significance to merit the award of the degree concerned. This remains a judgement of the Graduate Studies Committee on the recommendation of examiners.

The statement and justification of thesis format should form part of the research proposal submitted by the student as part of the written work submitted as part of both the Transfer of Status and the Confirmation of Status. If applicable, the decision and justification to return to the Book format at the time of Confirmation should also form part of the research proposal. The research proposal should also note future plans to undertake co-authored work, including remarks about the planned contribution of the student and the proportion of the contributions of the co-author/s.

Irrespective of format, the thesis should follow three basic principles:

The thesis should represent a programme of research.

1. Book-format theses should have a unifying narrative. Articles/Integrated theses should be organised around a single theme, with the links between chapters made clear in the introduction and conclusion. Such theses should include an introduction and a conclusion. And it should be clear how the chapters fit together as a coherent whole.
2. The thesis should be based on independent scholarship. Co-authored empirical chapters may be permitted, but the candidate should normally take the lead role and be first author.
3. The thesis should represent new and original work.

6.2 Published or submitted papers

Any submitted or published papers included in the thesis should relate directly to the candidate's approved field of study and must have been written while the candidate held PRS status or was registered for the MSc (by Research), MLitt or DPhil. Material from a master's degree at another institution may not be incorporated into an Oxford DPhil thesis. A DPhil thesis may, however, build directly on work completed during a master's programme at Oxford.

6.3 Research Ethics, fieldwork, travel and data protection

To conduct research for an DPhil thesis, students need to seek ethical approval ahead of time.

Action	**Where / how**	**Deadline**
Attend the Introduction to Research Ethics at Oxford session	Online	Wednesday, Week 4, every term
Complete the Research Integrity: Introductory Core Course	CoSy	Friday, Week 0, HT, first year
Submit an ethics application in Worktribe	WorkTribe	As soon as feasible in the first year, Hillary term in advance of Transfer of Status submission in Trinity term

The Research Integrity course is mandatory ahead of conducting any research at the University of Oxford. This course has several sections, so students should ensure they have a few hours available to complete it, though it can be completed across multiple sessions.

Students must pass with at least 80% and should send their certificate to the Graduate Studies Office.

The Introduction to Research Ethics at Oxford session will be hosted by the Research Governance, Ethics and Assurance team and is compulsory for all DPhil Sociology students to attend in Michaelmas term. See above for a link to the next training session.

Worktribe ethics

Students should create an application in Worktribe and work through the steps with their supervisor to submit their ethics application. If the student will only be using secondary data, or will not be involving human participants, it is likely that Worktribe will advise that further ethical approval is not required. If this is the case, students must confirm with their supervisor and submit evidence from Worktribe to the Ethics Officer at DREC@sociology.ox.ac.uk.

If you propose to use GenAI to process or analyse research data, you should consider this as part of your research ethics and data protection planning. Particular care is required where research involves personal, sensitive, confidential or unpublished data. Any use of GenAI must comply with the University's requirements for research ethics, information security and data protection, and with any conditions attached to third-party data.

Planning your Worktribe application:

- When applying, allow sufficient time for review and any amendments before the prosed start date. This should ideally be at least 30 days after the application submission date, as this tends to be how long the approval process takes
- Complete the Information Security training and have the evidence available.
- Upload the supporting documents relevant to your research in the Documents section (The Research Governance team have templates that are recommended for use here). Depending on the project this may include:
    - Participant information sheets
    - Written informed consent forms
    - Oral scripts
    - Recruitment materials
- The Ethics Applicant User guide is a helpful starting point for using Worktribe

Data Protection by Design

If students are working with personal data, they may need to complete additional steps through in the University's Data Protection by Design process. Students should start this process early and discuss it with their supervisor, and initially fill out a Data Protection Screening (DPS) form.

Depending on answers on this form, students will need to fill out either:

- a Data Protection Assessment (DPA) form – lower risk research
- a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) – higher risk research

The relevant forms should be sent to the Ethics Officer to seek formal signoff by the Head of Department or the Data Protection Officer. Signed forms must be uploaded to the 'Documents' section of the Worktribe application.

Risk levels and review

Once an ethics application is submitted, it will be sent to the student's supervisor to approve (as Principal Investigator of the research). Depending on the risk level assigned by Worktribe, the application will be reviewed by:

- Low risk (30 days) – the student's supervisor only
- Medium risk (30 days) – the student's supervisor and a member of the Sociology Departmental Research Ethics Committee (DREC)
- High risk (60 days) – the student's supervisor and a member of the Social Sciences and Humanities Inter-Divisional Research Ethics Committee (SSH IDREC)

Students may be required to provide additional information regarding their proposed project during the review stage.

6.3.1 Fieldwork and travel

Fieldwork is not required for the DPhil, but may form an important part of a student's research project. Fieldwork should be planned with the supervisor and should take account of the location, activities, participants, travel arrangements and any other factors that may affect the student's safety or wellbeing. Fieldwork may take place in the UK or overseas.

- Before the Transfer of Status interview, where fieldwork is planned, students must have completed and submitted the relevant Travel and Fieldwork Risk Assessment. The assessment should identify significant risks, the measures in place to reduce or manage those risks, and contingency arrangements in case something goes wrong.
- Before beginning fieldwork, students must have any required risk assessment approval and complete any relevant training or other requirements. This includes watching the Fieldwork & Overseas Risk Assessment for Travellers video.

For overseas fieldwork, students should check current University travel guidance, arrange travel insurance, and complete any travel registration process required by the University. Students should check whether their proposed destination or activities create additional requirements.

Before travelling, the student and supervisor should agree how and how often they will maintain contact while the student is away, including arrangements for emergency contact and what should happen if planned contact is missed.

If the research design, participant group, fieldwork location, methods or circumstances change materially after ethics approval or completion of the risk assessment, students should discuss the change with their supervisor before proceeding and determine whether the ethics application, risk assessment or other documentation needs to be updated.

After returning from fieldwork, students should meet with their supervisor to discuss any significant issues arising during the fieldwork and any changes that may need to be reflected in the research plan.

- Watch the Fieldwork & Overseas Risk Assessment for Travellers video.
- Complete a Travel and Fieldwork Risk Assessment form and log details of their fieldwork trip with risk assessment form attached (and apply for travel insurance if required) on the Travel Insurance Registration System (TIRS).

6.4 Co-authored work and supporting forms

Where the thesis includes co-authored empirical chapters, the candidate should normally take the lead role and be first author. Any co-authored material must be clearly identified, and the candidate's contribution must be set out in the relevant GSO.14 form, as applicable, and again in the GSO.3 form at the point of appointment of examiners in preparation for the final examination of the thesis. Any co-author statements required by the relevant form must be signed by all co-authors and supervisor (if different than co-author/s).

Co-authored work should relate directly to the candidate's approved field of study and must have been written while the candidate held PRS status or was registered for the MSc (by Research), MLitt or DPhil. Material from a master's degree at another institution may not be incorporated into an Oxford DPhil thesis, although the thesis may build directly on work completed during a master's programme at Oxford.

6.5 Submission

The University Guide to Research Examinations provides useful information on submitting a thesis.

6.5.1 Formatting

All DPhil theses must:

- Use 12-point font, and preferably a serif font such as Times New Roman;
- Give the length of the text in number of words;
- Present the main text in double spacing with quotations and footnotes in single spacing. Place footnotes, where present, at the bottom of each page;
- Have numbered pages;
- Use referencing that corresponds to one of the established bibliographic conventions: preferably APA style and not Vancouver;
- Be submitted in English; unless for exceptional reasons otherwise determined by a relevant Board, in the term in which the candidate is first admitted;
- Have a margin of 1.25 to 1.5 inches (3.2 to 3.8 cm) on the left-hand side of each page.

The thesis should be of no more than the 100,000 words, with footnotes and tables included in this figure. References and appendices are not included. As a guideline, appendices should make up no more than 30% of the thesis.

Successful DPhil theses are often considerably shorter than this maximum length. Increases to the maximum DPhil limit are rarely permitted, and must have a strong justification related to the substance of the thesis. The Graduate Studies Committee should be consulted about any request for such an exception well in advance of submission of the thesis.

The thesis must include an abstract of no more than 300 words, which should concisely summarise its scope and principal arguments. The abstract should be headed with the title of the thesis, the name and college of the candidate, the degree for which it is submitted, and the term and year of submission.

6.5.2 Joint work

At submission, students must include with the Appointment of Examiners form a statement identifying any part of the thesis that is not their own work. Examiners will take this statement into account when assessing the extent of the candidate's original contribution and whether the thesis contains sufficient original work of appropriate quality for the award of the DPhil. Students should contact the Graduate Studies Officer for the latest guidance on the authorship statement.

All work must be clearly referenced. Where tables, figures or other material from co-authored work are reproduced, it must be clear whether the material is the student's own work. Written permission should also be obtained from co-authors before reusing any material from co-authored papers. Co-authorship should be acknowledged in the thesis, and where relevant should also be noted in footnotes and references.

6.5.3 How to submit

Students should submit the official copy of their thesis for examination digitally via the Research Thesis Digital Submission system (RTDS).

Examiners may request a hard copy of the thesis from the Examination Schools and this will be arranged and paid for centrally by the Submissions and Research Degrees team. The minimum time between both examiners receiving the official copy of the thesis via RTDS and a viva date is 4 weeks.

6.6 Good academic practice and avoiding plagiarism

The most relevant rules are summarised below. In exceptional circumstances, it may be possible to seek dispensation from these rules. Students should consult the Examination Regulations for the full text and seek further advice from their supervisor.

6.6.1 What is plagiarism?

The University defines plagiarism as follows:

"*Presenting work or ideas from another source as your own, with or without consent of the original author, 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, as is the use of material generated wholly or in part through use of artificial intelligence (save when use of AI for assessment has received prior authorisation e.g. as a*

reasonable adjustment for a student's disability). Plagiarism can also include re-using your own work without citation. Under the regulations for examinations, intentional or reckless plagiarism is a disciplinary offence."

As the University definition above makes clear, inappropriate use of generative AI may constitute plagiarism. Students must not present material generated wholly or in part by AI as their own work, except where such use is explicitly permitted. Students are responsible for ensuring that any use of generative AI complies with University and Departmental requirements and with the specific requirements of the assessment concerned.

Inappropriate or undeclared use of generative AI may raise concerns about academic integrity or plagiarism. Students are responsible for ensuring that their use of GenAI complies with University and Departmental requirements. Guidance on the use of GenAI in doctoral research, including substantive use, transparency and declaration, is provided in Section 3.3, with additional requirements for Transfer, Confirmation and the DPhil thesis set out in Sections 4, 5 and 6.

The University-approved submission system, Inspera, is integrated with Turnitin. Turnitin may therefore be used to detect instances of poor academic practice and/or plagiarism in coursework submissions and online examination scripts. Where assessment includes open-book examinations, students will be required to sign up to the University's honour code.

Students may be found guilty of plagiarism if they:

- present or pass off another person's work as their own;
- import into their own work 'more than a single phrase from another person's work without the use of quotation marks and identification of the source';
- make 'extensive use of another person's work, either by summarising or paraphrasing it merely by changing a few words or altering the order of the presentation, without acknowledgement';
- use 'the ideas of another person without acknowledgement of the source' or 'submit or present work as their own' which is substantially the ideas or intellectual data of another;
- make 'a deliberate attempt at passing off the ideas or writings of another person as their own'; or
  take 'the words, ideas and labour of other people and give the impression that they are their own.'

6.6.2 Online course and associated resources

All students are required to complete the online Avoiding Plagiarism course and to email a copy of the certificate of completion to the Graduate Studies Officer by no later than the end of Week 2 of Michaelmas term.

Students should carefully read the Oxford Students website section regarding avoiding plagiarism, as well as refer to relevant study skills**.**

In addition, the resources below (available in various libraries across Oxford) will help identify and avoid plagiarism:

- Neville, Colin (2007) *The complete guide to referencing and avoiding plagiarism* Maidenhead; New York: Open University Press [SOLO link]

6.6.3 Raising concerns around plagiarism

Cases of plagiarism are taken extremely seriously and where examiners suspect that this has occurred, they bring the matter to the attention of the Proctors.

If a marker, or a Turnitin report generated during examination procedures, raises concerns about the proper attribution of a passage or piece of submitted work, the matter will be reported to the Chair of Examiners. The Chair will compile and retain any evidence and decide whether the case is one which may be dealt with by the Board (poor academic practice) or whether it is one that requires reference to the Proctors for investigation and possible disciplinary action.

Penalties for poor academic practice in submitted work and open-book online examinations are outlined in the MSc Sociology Examination Conventions. Students should refer to the University Student Handbook for information about the Proctors, Disciplinary Procedures and outcomes in relation to plagiarism.

6.6.4 Third-party proofreaders

Students have authorial responsibility for the written work they produce. Proof-reading represents the final stage of producing a piece of academic writing. Students are strongly encouraged to proof-read their own work, as this is an essential skill in the academic writing process. However, for longer pieces of work it is considered acceptable for students to seek the help of a third party for proof-reading. Such third parties can be professional proofreaders, fellow students, friends, or family members. This policy does not apply to the supervisory relationship, nor in the case where proof-reading assistance is approved as a reasonable adjustment for disability.

The use of third-party proofreaders is not permitted for work where the word limit is fewer than 10,000 words. The guidance below applies to all assessed written work where the word limit is 10,000 words or greater.

What a proofreader may and may not do

Within the context of students' written work, to proofread is to check for, identify and suggest corrections for errors in text. In no cases should a proofreader make material changes to a student's writing (that is, check or amend ideas, arguments or structure), since to do so is to compromise the authorship of the work.

A proofreader may:

- Identify typographical, spelling and punctuation errors;
- Identify formatting and layout errors and inconsistencies (e.g. page numbers, font size, line spacing, headers and footers);

- Identify grammatical and syntactical errors and anomalies or ambiguities in phrasing;
- Identify minor formatting errors in referencing (for consistency and order);
- Identify errors in the labelling of diagrams, charts or figures;
- Identify lexical repetition or omissions.

A proofreader may not:

- Add to content in any way;
- Check or correct facts, data calculations, formulae or equations;
- Rewrite content where meaning is ambiguous;
- Alter argument or logic where faulty;
- Re-arrange or re-order paragraphs to enhance structure or argument;
- Implement or significantly alter a referencing system;
- Re-label diagrams, charts or figures;
- Reduce content to comply with a specified word limit;
- Translate any part of the work into English.

Authorial responsibility

Students have overall authorial responsibility for their work and should choose whether they wish to accept the proofreader's advice. A third-party proofreader should mark up the student's work with suggested changes which the student may then choose to accept or reject.

Failure to adhere to these guidelines could constitute a breach of academic integrity and contravene the Regulations for Examinations. It is therefore the student's responsibility to provide the proofreader with a copy of this policy statement.

7 DPhil examination

The DPhil examination consists of the examination of the submitted thesis and an oral examination (*viva voce*) conducted by two examiners, normally one internal to the University and one external. The examination provides an opportunity for candidates to discuss and defend their research and for the examiners to assess the thesis and the candidate's knowledge of the field in which it is situated. To recommend the award of the DPhil, the examiners must be satisfied that the thesis is presented in a lucid and scholarly manner and makes a significant and substantial contribution to its field, and that the candidate has a good general knowledge of the relevant field of learning.

The sections below explain the appointment of examiners, arrangements for the viva and the requirements and procedures following examination.

7.1 Appointment of examiners

Applications for the appointment of examiners should be submitted by completion of the GSO.3 form for approval by the Director of Graduate Studies and the Graduate Studies Committee. The supervisor shall consult with the candidate concerning possible examiners, and forward the names of suggested examiners. One internal examiner and one external examiner are required, and reserves should be indicated in case the preferred examiners are unable to act. Anyone who has given significant help or advice to the student in the preparation of the thesis cannot act as an examiner, nor can anyone with a potential conflict of interest.

It is normal for one of the assessors who acted at the time of Transfer or Confirmation of Status to be the internal examiner.

Candidates that have been granted permission to submit an integrated thesis (articles-based thesis) should also submit a copy of their completed GSO.31 form when applying for the appointment of examiners.

7.2 Examination arrangements

The oral examination (viva voce) should be held within Oxford in a suitable university or college building, unless the Proctors give special permission for it to be held elsewhere. It shall, except in special circumstances, begin not earlier than 9am or later than 5pm and may be held during term time or long vac. The place and time of the examination shall be fixed by the examiners, who shall be responsible for informing the candidate of the arrangements made. The day shall be fixed by the examiners.

The examination may be attended by any member of the University in academic dress. No person who is not a member of the University may attend it except with the consent of both examiners.

Candidates are strongly recommended to take a copy of their thesis to the examination.

7.2.1 Early viva

Candidates may apply to the Graduate Studies Committee for the oral examination to take place by a specified date, provided that the date is at least one calendar month after the thesis has been received by the University Offices or after the examiners have agreed to act, whichever is later. If the Graduate Studies Committee is satisfied that there are special circumstances justifying this application, it will ask the examiners to make arrangements to enable the oral examination to be held within the period specified. It may not be possible to arrange an early viva, in which case they will be subject to the regular procedure.

7.2.2 Examination requirements

To award the DPhil, in their report, examiners must be able to certify that:

- The candidate possesses a good general knowledge of the field of learning within which the subject of the thesis falls
- The thesis is presented in a lucid and scholarly manner
- The candidate has made a significant and substantial contribution in the particular field of learning within which thesis falls

7.3 Following the DPhil examination

7.3.1 Deposit into Oxford Research Archive

The University of Oxford is committed to the widest dissemination of research theses produced by its graduate students. The Oxford University Research Archive (ORA) is an online archive of research materials including theses created in fulfilment of Oxford awards, produced by graduate students at the University of Oxford.

All students following the DPhil are required to deposit a digital copy of their thesis with the Bodleian Libraries. The digital copy should be deposited in the ORA after Leave to Supplicate (LTS) has been granted.

ORA provides maximum visibility and digital preservation for Oxford digital theses. Students should read information about the deposit of, and access to, digital theses which is available here and includes:

- Legal requirements and author responsibilities
- When to deposit the digital copy of your thesis
- How to deposit the digital copy of your thesis
- Options for open access and embargo access (for reasons such as sensitive content, material that would affect commercial interests, pre-publication or legal reasons) to all of part(s) of your thesis
- Information about file formats, fonts and file sizes

Copyright of the thesis usually rests with the author: this does not change when depositing your thesis in ORA. The author does not give away any rights to the Oxford University Research Archive or the Bodleian Libraries. However, students should read the information on third party copyright.

Students are strongly encouraged to ascertain and arrange permissions for inclusion and distribution of material via the Internet where copyright is held by a third party at the point that the items are gathered. This is similar to the process when writing a journal article or monograph. A 'Record of permissions' template has been created to assist with this process.

Further information or queries about depositing digital theses should be addressed to ORA@bodleian.ox.ac.uk.

All DPhil candidates will need to submit an electronic copy of their DPhil thesis to the Oxford University Research Archive (ORA) a minimum of five working days prior to their graduation date. Students will not be able to attend a degree ceremony (even in absentia) without doing so. Information regarding this process can be found on the Bodleian website and will be sent with your result letter.

7.3.2 Restricted access arrangements

The Social Sciences Division has agreed that access by others to the full text of digital theses will be restricted for three years by default. When completing the ORA online deposit form, authors should therefore enter an embargo end date of three years from the date of deposit. There is no need to complete a separate GSO.3C Dispensation from Consultation form at the time of deposit.

During the period of the embargo, only the following information from student theses will be available in ORA:

- Item record (details including student name, thesis title, subject area)
- Abstract
  Full text search

At the time of deposit an author may request permanent closure in ORA under the following circumstances:

- For digital material where copyright is held by a third party and permission to disseminate it via the Internet in ORA has not been granted by the copyright holder, the Department will grant permission for the copyright material to be deposited as a separate file from the thesis, on the understanding that the thesis will be available for consultation or reproduction but access to the copyright material will be restricted.
- Where confidential material forms only a small part of a thesis and the force of the thesis will not be seriously impaired by the removal of such material, the Department may grant permission for the access to the confidential material to be closed on the understanding that the thesis will be available for consultation or reproduction but access to the confidential material will be restricted.

Authors can also choose to override the default embargo and make their thesis open access, either at the time of deposit or at any time during the three-year embargo. Authors who wish to make their thesis freely available on deposit should indicate this on the Deposit and Consultation of Thesis form (GSO.3A) and on the online ORA deposit form. Once the embargo is in place, students wishing to end it early should e-mail ORA@bodleian.ox.ac.uk with instructions.

Those planning to publish their research as a book or article are not recommended to place their thesis on open access in ORA without first discussing this matter with their supervisor and consulting potential publishers to ascertain their policy. The embargo will be automatically lifted after the three-year period, and it is the responsibility of the author to apply for an extension if required. No reminder will be sent, and it will be assumed that the full text can be released if a Dispensation from Consultation form (GSO.3C) is not submitted (see below).

7.3.3 Dispensation from Consultation

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

Dispensation will always be granted:

- In cases where confidentiality has been made a condition of access to materials that are subsequently incorporated in a thesis, and
- For material where copyright is held by a third party and permission to disseminate it via the Internet has not been granted by the copyright holder. Students should apply for dispensation by completing form GSO.3C.

7.3.4 Journal Articles within the thesis

Authors sometimes include published journal articles within their theses. Authors needing to include such articles as part of the e-thesis can make the article freely available only in compliance with copyright and any sponsor permissions. See www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo.php for guidance or ask ORA staff (ORA@bodleian.ox.ac.uk).

7.3.5 Copyright

The copyright in the thesis usually remains with the author. In a tiny minority of cases, copyright might rest with a sponsor or other body. Students should speak to their supervisor or Research Services if they are unsure.

7.3.5.1 Third Party Copyright

If material has been incorporated within the thesis where copyright is held by an individual or group that is not the author (third party copyright) permission will be needed to make such

material freely available on the Internet. It is best to obtain such permission when sourcing the material. Proof of permission will need to be provided when depositing the thesis in ORA (e.g. e-mail or letter). Authors should contact ORA staff (ORA@bodleian.ox.ac.uk) if they are unsure. A useful template to keep track of permissions for use of third-party copyright materials is available for download.

7.3.6 Intellectual Property Rights

Authors should apply for dispensation from consultation if consultation or reproduction of all or part of the thesis would put at risk confidential material or invalidate an application for a patent on a product or process described in the thesis, or restricting access to the thesis is a requirement of any agreements with an outside body or sponsor governing supply of confidential material or the disclosure of research results described in the thesis. Authors should speak to their supervisor or Research Services if they are unsure.

7.3.7 Disclosure of data sources

Within the thesis, the source of the empirical material has to be described in detail. For secondary data, it must be made clear where the data used in the study can be obtained for purposes of replication. For primary data, the method section and/or appendices must describe the data collection process and provide relevant materials to allow the readers to assess the quality of the data and, if applicable, to replicate the data collection.

8 Skills and learning development

8.1 Academic progress

8.1.1 DPhil supervision

Every doctoral student is assigned one or two supervisors to guide them through their course of study.

The supervisor will report on the student's progress to the Graduate Studies Committee and will also provide feedback directly to the student. The Graduate Studies Committee will always seek the advice of the supervisor before recommending any change in status, transfer between courses, or other similar action. Students are expected to keep in regular contact with their supervisor and to keep them informed of their progress.

The supervisor will provide feedback on the proposed thesis topic, suggest alternative approaches, and comment on the research question, including any refinements or modifications that may be needed. In some cases, the supervisor may propose the research topic, or play a significant role in the formulation of the research question.

Students and Supervisors are required to submit a termly progress report through Graduate Supervision Reporting.

8.1.1.1 Graduate Supervision Reporting (GSR)

GSR is used by supervisors each term to review, monitor and comment on their student's academic progress and performance and to assess skills and training needs. Students are given the opportunity to contribute to their termly supervision reports by reviewing and commenting on their own academic progress. All students are required to submit a GSR report each term.

Students will receive a report on their termly supervision from their Supervisor. Completion of supervision reports is an important means by which the Department, Division and Colleges monitor student progress.

The supervision reporting process is controlled by a structured timetable with automatic notifications and reminders. Once reports are submitted, they are immediately available to the student, supervisor and Director of Graduate Studies for review. Additionally, subject administrators, college advisors, college administrators, and scholarship and funding administrators can view reports.

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 their university supervisor.

8.1.1.2 Change of supervisor

In some cases, it may be appropriate to change supervisor, for example if the direction of the student's work changes. The GSC and university supervisors recognise that there may

occasionally be incompatibilities of temperament or approach between Supervisor and student. Because of the importance Oxford attaches to the supervisor–student relationship, students are encouraged to discuss any concerns in confidence with the Director of Graduate Studies. Alternatively, they may seek advice and support from their College Adviser or College Tutor for Graduates. Any change of Supervisor requires the approval of the Graduate Studies Committee.

8.1.1.3 Code of Practice for supervisors of doctoral students

Supervisors responsible for the oversight of doctoral students are expected to:

- Meet with students (in general three times or more per term)
- Timely responses to materials submitted for comment
- Comment on final drafts in good time for students to respond before final submission
- Ask to see transcripts of interviews, or syntax files in data analysis to check that the thesis is indeed the student's own work
- Discuss progress and feedback any concern to the Director of Graduate Studies via GSS

These expectations depend in part on the supervisor's availability in Oxford during the summer vacation and on the student's timely submission of drafts. Supervisors should make reasonable efforts to remain available during the summer, and students are responsible for arranging dates for submission of work. It would also be helpful if supervisors warned students in advance of any extended period of unavailability during the month before the thesis submission date.

Formal responsibility ceases once students have passed the four-year submission deadline. Supervisors are nevertheless encouraged to read and comment on such students' final thesis drafts.

Fieldwork responsibilities

Where a student undertakes fieldwork, supervisors should discuss the ethical, legal and health and safety implications of the proposed research; review and discuss the relevant risk assessment with the student; identify any training needs; agree arrangements for maintaining contact while the student is away; and meet with the student after fieldwork to discuss any significant issues or lessons for the research.

8.2 Language learning and upskilling

The University of Oxford Language Centre provides a wide range of general and specialised courses in foreign languages and Academic English.

8.3 Opportunities to engage in the Department's research community

8.3.1 Departmental seminars

Departmental seminars are held during term time throughout the year at 12.45pm on Mondays. Further details are available on the Department's Events page and in weekly

newsletters. Students are also strongly encouraged to attend the Nuffield College Sociology Seminars, details of which are available on the Nuffield College Events and Seminars page.

8.4 Employability and career information and advice

Students are encouraged to make use of the University's careers and employability support during their studies. The **Oxford University Careers Service** provides careers advice and a range of resources and opportunities, including one-to-one advice, careers events, support with applications and interviews, skills development, internships and access to vacancies through CareerConnect.

Further information about opportunities to develop skills and gain experience alongside study is available through the Oxford Students: Work, skills and experience pages.

9 Student representation, evaluation and feedback

9.1 Department representation

9.1.1 Graduate Joint Consultative Committee (GJCC)

The GJCC exists to provide a forum for graduate students to put forward suggestions, comments and grievances about the courses and facilities provided by the Department. It will usually meet once per term. Membership includes student representatives from each degree programme, the Director of Graduate Studies, the Taught Course Director and the Graduate Studies Officer. The Head of Department and Head of Administration and Finance may also attend, along with other Departmental administrative staff.

All students are encouraged to submit items for discussion via their student representatives. Students are encouraged to put themselves forward for this Committee and if there are more volunteers than places, an election will be held.

9.1.2 Graduate Studies Committee (GSC)

The Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) oversees graduate teaching and academic matters within the Department. Its responsibilities include oversight of graduate programmes and teaching, the appointment of supervisors, consideration of relevant student applications and proposed changes to graduate courses and regulations.

The Committee is chaired by the Director of Graduate Studies and includes academic and administrative members of the Department. Student representatives also attend the unreserved business of the Committee, providing a direct link between the graduate student body and the Department's formal decision-making structures.

The GSC normally meets twice each term, in Weeks 2 and 7. Where an MSc student needs an application or other matter to be considered by the Committee, the relevant documentation should normally be submitted to the Graduate Studies Officer by Wednesday of Week 1 or Wednesday of Week 6, as appropriate. While some matters may be dealt with under the Chair’s action during the vacations, this is not the norm and will not always be appropriate. Enquiries about the work of the Graduate Studies Committee should be made to the Graduate Studies Officer.

The members of the GSC for 2026-27 are:

- Professor Ridhi Kashyap, Director of Graduate Studies (Chair)
- Dr Lindsay Richards, Director of Taught Courses
- *Academic representative, TBC*
- Laura O’Mahony, Head of Administration and Finance
- Adrian Wilson, Graduate Studies Officer (Secretary)
- Student representative or representatives (who attend only the unreserved business)

The Committee will:

- Consider applications for admission,

- Appoint a supervisor for each student,
- Consider applications from students during their programme (e.g. change of course; Transfer of Status; Confirmation of Status; Extensions of time etc.)
- Review the programme of teaching and consider changes in regulations etc.

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9.2 Divisional and University representation

Student representatives sitting on the Divisional Board are selected through a process organised by the Oxford University Student Union (Oxford SU). Details can be found on the Oxford SU website along with information about student representation at the University level.

9.3 Opportunities to provide evaluation and feedback

DPhil students are welcome to provide feedback to the Graduate-studies@Sociology.ox.ac.uk at any point throughout their studies. Additionally, we welcome feedback via the GJCC.

At the University level, students on full-time and part-time matriculated courses will be surveyed once per year on all aspects of their course (learning, living, pastoral support, college) through the Student Barometer. Previous results can be viewed by students, staff and the general public at: www.ox.ac.uk/students/life/student-surveys.

Final year undergraduate students are surveyed instead through the National Student Survey. Results from previous NSS can be found at discoveruni.gov.uk/

10 Student life and support

10.1 Who to contact for help

Students experiencing academic, administrative or personal difficulties have several sources of support available to them through the Department, their college and the wider University.

For academic matters, students should normally speak to their supervisor in the first instance. Questions relating to a particular paper or class should normally be raised with the relevant Course convenor. The Graduate Studies Officer can advise on administrative matters and University processes and, where appropriate, students may also seek advice from the Taught Course Director or Director of Graduate Studies.

Colleges provide both academic and pastoral support. Students may seek advice from their College Adviser, Tutor for Graduates, Senior Tutor or other appropriate college contact. Each college has its own arrangements, and students should consult their college handbook or website for details.

Students who are ill or otherwise unable to attend scheduled teaching should notify the Course convenor/Graduate Studies Officer/supervisor as appropriate. Where illness or other circumstances are affecting a student's ability to study or complete assessments, students should seek advice promptly from their college and the Department. Information about University processes relating to problems completing assessment is provided in Section 4.5.1 of this handbook.

Students may also raise matters through the elected graduate student representatives in the Department. General concerns affecting the student body can be raised through the Graduate Joint Consultative Committee (GJCC); further information about student representation is provided in Section 6.

Further information and support are available through the Oxford Students welfare pages, including support relating to physical and mental health, disability, harassment and sexual misconduct. The University's Student Welfare and Support Services complement the support provided by departments and colleges.

10.1.1 Disability support

The Disability Advisory Service (DAS) provides information, advice and guidance on reasonable adjustments to teaching and assessment and can assist with arranging disability-related study support. Students may also contact the Department's Disability Coordinator for departmental queries relating to disability support.

10.1.2 Counselling and wellbeing

The University Counselling Service provides free and confidential support for students experiencing personal or emotional difficulties. A range of other University and student-led support is available, including Nightline and peer-support services. Further information is available through the Oxford Students welfare pages.

10.2 Complaints and appeals

10.2.1 Complaints

If a student's concern or complaint relates to teaching or other provision made by the Department, it should be raised with the course director, Director of Graduate Studies or GJCC as appropriate. The officer concerned should attempt to resolve the concern/complaint informally. If the student is dissatisfied with the outcome, he or she may take the concern further by making a formal complaint to the Proctors. A complaint may cover aspects of teaching and learning (e.g. teaching facilities, supervision arrangements, etc.), and non-academic issues (e.g. support services, library services, university accommodation, university clubs and societies, etc.). A complaint to the Proctors should be made only if attempts at informal resolution have been unsuccessful.

10.2.2 Appeals

An appeal is defined as where a student wishes to challenge a decision relating to an academic matter which has been made by an academic committee or body. For postgraduate courses, a concern which might lead to an appeal should be raised with the college authorities and the individual responsible for overseeing the student's work. It must not be raised directly with examiners or assessors. If it is not possible to resolve the issue in this way, the student may put his/her concern in writing and submit it to the Proctors via the Senior Tutor or Tutor for Graduates of the college (or via the department, for non-matriculated students).

The Proctors are not empowered to challenge the academic judgement of examiners or academic bodies. The Proctors can consider whether the procedures for reaching an academic decision were properly followed; i.e. whether there was a significant procedural administrative error; whether there is evidence of bias or inadequate assessment; whether the examiners failed to take into account special factors affecting a candidate's performance.

Academic appeals must normally be submitted within 20 working days of the date on which you were notified of the relevant academic decision.

10.3 Policies and 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 www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/regulations/a-z.

10.3.1 Student conduct

Students at Oxford are subject to two separate (but complementary) sets of disciplinary regulations: the rules and by-laws of their college provided in the college handbook or equivalent document, and the University's conduct regulations including the Code of Discipline.

Students should consult the Student Conduct page on the Oxford Students Website for information about the University conduct regulations and the Proctors' role in enforcing disciplinary regulations under statutes IX and XI.

Students are responsible for consulting and familiarising themselves with the Statutes and Regulations, which include rules on non-academic behaviour and academic conduct. Students who intentionally or recklessly breach regulations, or incite or conspire with others to do so, may face disciplinary action.

10.3.2 Freedom of speech

The Department is committed to upholding the University's principles and policies on freedom of speech. Students should familiarise themselves with the University's Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech, which sets out the University's approach to securing freedom of speech within the law.

10.3.3 Harassment and sexual misconduct support

The Department is committed to fostering an inclusive environment in which the rights and dignity of all students are respected. Harassment, sexual misconduct, bullying and victimisation are not tolerated, and all members of the University community are expected to treat one another with respect, courtesy and consideration.

All students starting a course from 1 September 2026 are required to complete the University's online Harassment and Sexual Misconduct training. Students are encouraged to complete the training after receiving their Single Sign-On (SSO) and before completing student registration.

New students should also read Understanding Harassment and Sexual Misconduct: What you need to know, which provides information about harassment and sexual misconduct and the University's approach to prevention and response.

Comprehensive information about University policies and procedures, sources of support, reporting options and other resources is available through Supporting Students at Oxford: Preventing and Responding to Harassment and Sexual Misconduct.

10.4 Fees

Course fees are published on the university website and payable to the student's college at the start of the course. DPhil students pay fees for a maximum of nine terms.

Fees are charged whether the student is working in Oxford. Fees are not charged if the student status is formally suspended by the Graduate Studies Committee.

10.5 Residency requirements

The University's residency requirements for postgraduate research students (PGR) are more flexible than those for postgraduate taught students. In general, PGR students must:

Limits: reside within 25 miles of Carfax Tower, unless given special permission to work away from Oxford for a period of time (typically agreed and approved by the Department).

terms: be in residence for at least six weeks for six terms over the duration of the programme for full-time students if they have no prior study at Oxford, or six weeks for three terms if the student has successfully completed a Masters at Oxford. The terms do not need to be consecutive.

Residence as a Recognised Student does not count towards residence required for Oxford degrees. Additional residence requirements may apply to scholarships or other forms of funding. Overseas students must familiarise themselves and comply with any UK visa rules and regulations.

Applications made to the Graduate Studies Committee for dispensation from the residence requirement can be considered if and only if it is essential for the work on the thesis to be carried out away from Oxford. The maximum number of terms for which such dispensation may be granted is three.

Students should note that, with the consent of their college and support of their supervisor, they may leave Oxford for a period, so long as they return and fulfil the necessary residence requirement before submitting their thesis. Fees will continue to be payable during such absence.

10.6 Suspension of status

With the support of their supervisor and college, students may apply to the Graduate Studies Committee for suspension of status for a specified period. The Graduate Studies Committee may consider applications for suspension where the student is prevented from pursuing their course of study in circumstances which are outside their control though there are good grounds for believing that they will be able to resume work within a reasonable period (e.g. medical problems, mental health concerns, maternity leave, paternity leave and unexpected domestic crises).

Students are expected to endeavour to complete their studies within the normal time limits for the course in question and the Graduate Studies Committee is not prepared to consider applications for suspension merely on the ground that a student wishes to engage, for personal reasons, in some other activity and then return to their graduate work at some later date.

If an application for the suspension of status is granted, students will be suspended for the duration of 3 terms on the basis that the degree is a structured taught course. Please see Graduate Forms for Exceptional Circumstances for application forms for Suspension of Status and Return from Suspension of Status.

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 an adverse effect on their academic performance. In this case, they should seek advice from their college and the Oxford Students website.

11 Facilities

11.1 Social spaces and facilities

The Department of Sociology is based at 42–43 Park End Street, Oxford, OX1 1JD. All Sociology students are welcome to use the Department building and have access using their University Card. The Department has a large social area and kitchen, as well as an outside seating area next to the river.

Further information about the location of the Department, building access and accessibility is provided in Section 1.7 of this handbook. Queries about departmental facilities can be directed to reception@sociology.ox.ac.uk.

11.2 Workspace

The Department provides a large student workspace, together with printer and copier facilities. Two meeting rooms are available for group work and can be booked by students, and two soundproof booths are available for video calls. Students may also make use of study and workspace provided by their college and across the wider University.

11.3 Libraries

Students have access to the University's extensive Bodleian Libraries network and to library facilities provided by their college. The Social Science Library (SSL), located in the Manor Road Building, is the principal Bodleian library supporting students and staff in the Social Sciences Division. It provides lending and reference collections, study spaces, printing and IT facilities, and research support.

Students will receive information about Oxford's library services during induction, including guidance on using SOLO, the University's search and discovery tool for library collections. For 2026–27, new MSc and MPhil Sociology students will have an Introduction to Library Services session in Manor Road Building Seminar Room A on Monday 5 October, 15:00–16:00, followed by a tour of the Social Science Library from 16:00–16:30.

Further information about the Social Science Library and other Bodleian Libraries is available through the Bodleian Libraries website.

11.4 IT

Students have access to the University's central IT services, including University email, Wi-Fi, Canvas and other systems and digital resources required for their studies. Access to many University services is through students' Oxford Single Sign-On (SSO), and eduroam provides wireless network access across the University.

Local IT support for the Department of Sociology is provided by the Social Sciences Division IT team. Students requiring assistance with departmental IT should contact itsg-support@sociology.ox.ac.uk. Further information about University-wide IT services, support and digital skills training is available through the University's IT webpages.

12 Sociology glossary

Please use in conjunction with the Oxford glossary.

Word or term	Description
CUREC, IDREC DREC	The Central University Research Ethics Committee has overall responsibility for the development of the University's policy on research involving human participants, human tissue and personal data, and for the University's ethics review process. The Social Sciences and Humanities Interdivisional Research Ethics Committee (SSH IDREC) is one of CUREC's three subcommittees. The Sociology Departmental Research Ethics Committee (DREC) sits within the SSH IDREC and manages ethics applications from staff and students based within the Department of Sociology.
DAS	Disability Advisory Service
DGS	Director of Graduate Studies
DPhil	Doctor of Philosophy
DTC	Director of Taught Courses
DTP	Doctoral Training Programme/Partnership. The University of Oxford is part of the Grand Union DTP along with Brunel University and the Open University. It is funded by ESRC and it is how several of our doctoral students receive financial support. It also facilitates various training activities open to all Oxford students.
EPC	Education Policy Committee
ESRC	The Economic and Social Research Council, based within UK Research and Innovation
GJCC	Graduate Joint Consultative Committee
Grey Book	The university's examination regulations
GSC	Graduate Studies Committee
GSO	Graduate Studies Office
GST	Graduate Supervision Reporting
NCRM	National Centre for Research Methods. Maintains a UK research training courses database and offers bursaries.
PGT	Postgraduate taught course (i.e. MSc and MPhil)
PGR	Postgraduate research (i.e. DPhil)
Proctors	The two Proctors (Senior and Junior) have responsibilities under the statutes and regulations for aspects of student discipline, for

	ensuring the proper conduct of examinations and for dealing with complaints.
PRS	Probationary research student (typically the first year of a DPhil course)
SSD	Social Sciences Division; the Division in which the Department of Sociology sits
SSP	Student support plan
TNA	Training Needs Analysis

Annexe A: Guidance on Generative Artificial Intelligence Use

Scope and background

The Department recognises that there are different types of doctoral projects that are undertaken and linked to this there may be different use cases of Generative AI with each. The guidance here is intended to provide broad general principles, but we encourage students to discuss these in more detail with their supervisors. This document should also be read in conjunction with the University policy for using Generative AI in Research.

You are permitted to use AI tools in an assistive capacity to support your doctoral research. However, AI cannot be used to do substantive work entirely or in part such that AI would be considered an author or co-author of the doctoral work.

Examples of assistive capacity could include:

- for background literature search, assistance in finding references;
- For brainstorming and feedback on ideas and hypotheses;
- for machine translation of foreign language texts;
- for proof-reading and editing text for grammar, spelling and/or academic tone, but only in a suggestive capacity and not to write new text;
- for data entry or extraction tasks (e.g. from a PDF or a .CSV);
- for data annotation or labelling tasks;
- for improving code efficiency and testing code and its execution, for setting up structured code repositories and support with organising replication packages; but not for setting up the fundamentals of the quantitative analysis such as choosing of the statistical or computational model, estimation procedures, variables etc.

In many cases, it is not advisable to feed in empirical data, especially if it contains personal data, into an AI model (see related university policies around information security and data protection that are relevant when sharing any data with Gen AI tools). For many secondary datasets, entering data into AI tools should also be considered from the perspective of whether the data licence permits this. Consider also issues of Intellectual Property or Copyright when feeding in information into Gen AI tools. When using primary data collected by a researcher with AI tools, these must be declared and reviewed within appropriate ethics applications and procedures.

In establishing the framework or plans for data analysis, it may be helpful to use Gen AI tools as an interlocutor, i.e. to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of planned methods or approaches or to elicit feedback on your plans or ideas. This is an acceptable use. However, ultimately, the decision to use a given model or approach and its credibility is a decision that you must make in conversation with your supervisor(s). Remember that in your doctoral milestone assessments you will be expected to explain and justify your research, including detailed aspects of the methods. In these oral assessments you will not have access to AI.

While there are many opportunities offered by AI, there are also known limitations with current Gen AI tools such as hallucination of concepts and/or citations, biases, and/or their probabilistic nature that challenges core ideas of research reproducibility and robustness. Ultimately the validity and integrity of what you write in your doctoral thesis is your own responsibility.

For your summative milestone assessments of transfer and confirmation of status, you will be required to submit an AI disclosure statement as a part of your submission (see Annexe B). This statement should outline how AI was used in the production of the work, including model and version. If AI was not used, please also note this explicitly. The final thesis should also include an AI disclosure statement within it. This can follow the format of the AI disclosure statement in Annexe B, but can also be included in narrative form and appended in the preliminary pages of the thesis or contained within each chapter if uses vary across chapters. If writing in narrative form, ensure that all points relevant to the AI declaration noted in Annexe B are appropriately addressed.

Annexe B: AI Declaration

Department of Sociology – Declaration on the Use of Generative AI

Version 2.0 (Published 2nd October 2026)

If you have not used any generative AI tools in preparing this work, please complete Section A.
If you have used generative AI in an authorised assistive capacity, please complete Section B and ensure that you answer all questions.

Guidance Notes

- Always include tool name and version, and verify all AI-produced material for accuracy and originality.
- Include this declaration before the title page of your submission.

Section A – No AI Use

Student declaration

I confirm that I have not used any Generative Artificial Intelligence (Gen AI) tools or technologies in preparing this assessment.

I further confirm that I have read and understood the Department of Sociology Generative AI Policy and the University's Policy on the Use of AI in Summative Assessment, and that I understand the potential academic and disciplinary consequences of breaching these regulations.

I confirm that by adding my candidate number and the date below I am signing to state that I understand that unauthorised or undisclosed use of AI tools in the preparation of assessed work constitutes a breach of the University's regulations on academic integrity and may be treated as a case of plagiarism or cheating, to be referred to the Proctors under the relevant disciplinary procedures.

Candidate Number:
Assessment Code:
Assessment Name:
Date:

Section B – Authorised AI Use (Assistive Capacity Only)

PLEASE ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS BELOW

By filling in Section B and signing the bottom of this form, I confirm the following:

- Any use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (Gen AI) tools in preparing this assessment complies with the Department of Sociology Generative AI Policy
- AI tools were used only in an assistive capacity to support my learning and were not used to generate, rewrite, or co-author substantive content of this work.
- I understand that using AI tools beyond the authorised limits, failing to disclose their use, or misrepresenting AI-generated content as my own constitutes academic misconduct, which may result in disciplinary action under University regulations, including referral to the Proctors.
- I have read and understood the Department of Sociology Generative AI Policy and the University's AI in Summative Assessment Policy, and I understand the potential academic and disciplinary consequences of breaching these policies.

1. Which permitted use of AI are you acknowledging? Write in sentences giving context-specific detail for transparency, e.g. "AI was used to find background literature references related to the strength of weak ties. AI was used to troubleshoot code related to cleaning the dataset. AI was used to assist in the writing process by improving spelling and grammar."

ANSWER:

2. Which tool(s) did you use (name + version)? If different tools were used for different tasks, specify which ones and for which tasks.

ANSWER:

3. How did you use or change the AI output before including it in your work? (e.g. "Sources suggested by AI were cross-checked. Code changes suggested by AI were implemented and tested to assess if they were implemented correctly.").)

ANSWER:

4. How did you ensure compliance with academic integrity and data-protection standards? (e.g. "I did not enter any sensitive data into AI tools. I assessed specific page numbers and references provided by AI. I did not copy and paste any text directly from AI tools.".)

ANSWER:

Student declaration

I confirm that by adding my candidate number and the date below I am signing to state that the information above is accurate. I understand that unauthorised or undisclosed use of AI tools may constitute academic misconduct and be referred to the Proctors under University Regulations.

Candidate Number:
Assessment Code:
Assessment Name:
Date: