Master of Philosophy in Cuneiform Studies

Course Handbook

Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies

Academic Year 2022-23 v.2

Course Director – Prof. **Jacob L. Dahl**

The Examination Regulations relating to this course are available here
https://examregs.admin.ox.ac.uk/Regulation?code=domopitfoaamiddeaststud&srchYear=2022&srchTerm=1&year=2022&term=1).

If there is a conflict between information in this handbook and the Examination Regulations then you should follow the Examination Regulations. If you have any concerns please contact the Senior Academic Administrator, Chris Mitchell (chris.mitchell@orinst.ox.ac.uk).

The information in this handbook is accurate as at Michaelmas Term 2022; however, it may be necessary for changes to be made in certain circumstances, as explained at www.ox.ac.uk/coursechanges. If such changes are made the faculty will publish a new version of this handbook together with a list of the changes and students will be informed.

THIS HANDBOOK

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

You should consult the current edition of the Examination Regulations (https://examregs.admin.ox.ac.uk/Regulation?code=domopitfoaamiddeaststud&srchYear=2022&srchTerm=1&year=2022&term=1) for information regarding your course. The information in this handbook should be read in conjunction with:

- the Faculty's general Masters handbook;
- the Examination Regulations;
- the University Student Handbook
- your college handbook.

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

Comments and criticism of the handbook are always welcome; they should be sent to the Director of Graduate Studies or the Senior Academic Administrator, Chris Mitchell.

Version history

1	September 2022	Original publication.
2	January 2023	Links to 2022-23 Examination Regulations added.

Contents

INTRODUCTION TO THE MPHIL CUNEIFORM STUDIES

Introduction

This course provides a satisfying and advanced study of the languages, culture, and history of ancient Mesopotamia. While it can function as self-contained in its own right, it is also intended to take students to the point where they can consider embarking on doctoral research.

The academic focus is on studying the two principal languages of ancient Mesopotamia and the surrounding regions: Akkadian and Sumerian. Considerable emphasis is also placed on knowledge of the literature, cultural and political history, and archaeology of this area. Detailed familiarity with primary sources, studied in the original languages and scripts, lies at the heart of all stages of the course. A major objective is for students to engage with a range of historiographical and literary-critical methods used to understand these sources.

The technical objectives of the course are that the student should acquire a reliable knowledge of both Sumerian and Akkadian grammar, vocabulary, and cuneiform script and that they should develop their ability to tackle unedited but published cuneiform texts in both languages. The student should become familiar with the main dialects of Sumerian and Akkadian and learn how to work independently with other dialects. He or she should acquire a good knowledge of the secondary literature, including the various aids to study (dictionaries, sign lists, bibliographical indices, etc.), and how to use them effectively. Training in handling, reading, and copying original cuneiform tablets will also be available.

A reading knowledge of French and German is required for the MPhil in Cuneiform Studies. Much of the secondary literature on the subject is written in these languages and a reading knowledge is essential for the standard of work expected at graduate level. A 'reading knowledge' means the ability to read in the language with the aid of a dictionary. The Oxford University Language Centre offers courses and self-study options that may be helpful during the first year of the course, including the summer vacation.

History

The ancient written cultures of Mesopotamia are preserved in cuneiform script, which first emerged about 3350 BC and died out in the first century AD. Assyriology began at Oxford with the appointment of Archibald Henry Sayce as Professor of Assyriology in 1891. Subsequent post holders with the title of Professor have been Stephen Langdon, Oliver Gurney, and Marc Van De Mieroop. Other post-holders in the field have included Reginald Campbell Thompson as Reader, and C. J. Ball and Peter Hulin as Lecturers. Two key posts were established in 1987, a University Lecturership in Akkadian, filled by Jeremy Black (1987-2004), and a Shillito Fellowship in Assyriology, filled by Stephanie Dalley (1987-2007). Frances Reynolds was appointed as Shillito Fellow in Assyriology in 2006, after holding a Departmental Lecturership. Jacob L. Dahl took up the Associate Professorship in Assyriology in October 2008, and he was subsequently made full professor in 2017.

Outline

From the beginning of the course, students should expect to be engaged in academic work for a minimum of thirty-five hours a week during Full Term and to need to do a considerable amount of work during the vacations. The course is taught through a mixture of classes, lectures, and seminars, with some tutorials. Tutorials normally consist of a one-to-one discussion with a tutor based on a written work produced by the student.

The syllabus is flexible and designed to meet the needs and interests both of those new to the field and of those who have studied cuneiform at undergraduate level. Language classes in Akkadian or in Akkadian and Sumerian are usually held between four and six hours per week, accompanied by about four hours of lectures and seminars on historical and cultural topics. However, the teaching structure varies depending on the syllabus followed. All students take 5 papers and also submit a thesis:

1. Prepared translations of Sumerian texts and related essay questions (1 paper)
2. Prepared translations of Akkadian texts and related essay questions (1 paper)
   The list of set texts in the Sumerian and Akkadian languages may change annually to accommodate the student's previous work in cuneiform studies and academic priorities. The texts will include a number of the set texts also read by undergraduate students.
3. Unprepared translations of Akkadian (1 paper)
4. History and civilization in ancient Mesopotamia (1 paper)
   Students must demonstrate knowledge of the outlines of major aspects of Mesopotamian history, including political, social, economic, and cultural developments. They will be required to submit two essays, which display knowledge of more than just a narrow range of the topic.
5. The Cuneiform world in context and Ancient Near Eastern Inscribed Artefacts:
   (a) Cuneiform world in context (one half paper)
   Students must be able to integrate the study of the cuneiform world into the wider context of the Near East. A specialisation within one of three approaches may be pursued:
   - *The cuneiform world and the ancient Near East, i.e., the Hittite, Egyptian, or Biblical worlds.*
   - *The cuneiform world and the ancient Mediterranean, i.e., Graeco-Roman antiquity.*
   - *The cuneiform world and the later Near East, i.e., late antique and medieval periods*
   Not all options may be available every year. Students must specify which of these approaches they are going to pursue in Trinity Term of Year 1 so that the necessary teaching can be arranged.
   (b) Ancient Near Eastern Inscribed Artefacts (one half paper)

In order to fulfil the requirements of their chosen specialisation, students may be required to attend lectures in other programmes at the University of Oxford or elsewhere.

Options will be subject to the availability of teaching each year.

Teaching of the Course

Unless Akkadian has already been studied at an appropriate undergraduate level, all students take intensive introductory classes in Akkadian grammar and cuneiform script in the first term of the first year for four hours each week and are usually taught together with undergraduates. These classes are followed in the first year by introductory set text classes, reading selected Laws of Hammurabi, the Descent of Ishtar to the Netherworld, Assyrian royal Annals, and the Flood Story in the Epic of Gilgamesh. The more advanced Akkadian set texts are mainly read in classes during the rest of the course, in the first and second years for those with appropriate Akkadian experience at undergraduate level and in the second year for all other students. The choice of texts varies but options have included the Babylonian Epic of Creation Tablets I and IV, letters from Mari, Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian royal inscriptions, Old Babylonian Letters, and the Prologue and

Epilogue of the Laws of Hammurapi. In the second and third terms of the second year, students take Akkadian unseen classes to develop their skills in unprepared translation.

Unless Sumerian has already been studied at an appropriate undergraduate level, all students take intensive classes in Sumerian grammar and introductory set texts usually in the third term of the first year. More advanced Sumerian set texts are mainly read in classes during the rest of the course, in the first and second years for those with appropriate Sumerian experience at undergraduate level and in the second year for all other students. The choice of texts varies but options have included inscriptions of Gudea and Old Babylonian Sumerian literature.

All text-reading classes require extensive preparation in advance by the student, using the set editions and other study aids, such as dictionaries and sign lists, copies of which are held by the library. In general, the amount of class work and preparation is considerable and students should expect to be working intensively throughout the two-year course.

The syllabus includes lectures and seminars throughout the course on a wide range of cultural, literary, and historical subjects. These include a broad survey course on Mesopotamian history and culture in the first year for those new to the field. In Hilary Term classes are held in the Ashmolean Museum and students are expected to attend these in their first or second year, in preparation of the inscribed artefacts paper. Students are encouraged to attend also the classes in Michaelmas Term which provide an opportunity to work with original un-inscribed artefacts. Students are also encouraged to attend lectures in related subjects, e.g. Egyptology and archaeology, although this must be commensurate with their workload. Each term seminars are arranged in Ancient Near Eastern Studies and Egyptology, when local and visiting speakers present papers for discussion. These are usually followed by tea and informal discussion in the Faculty's Common Room.

For Paper 5a on the Cuneiform World in Context students choose an option from one of the following three approaches: either the Hittite, Egyptian, or Biblical worlds; or Graeco-Roman antiquity; or the Near East in the late antique and Medieval periods. Not all options may be available every year. Students must specify which of these approaches they are going to pursue not later than the end of the third term of the first year, so that the necessary teaching can be arranged.

Work on the thesis should have begun by the summer term of the first year and a considerable amount of work should be undertaken during the Long Vacation between the first and second years. Completing the bulk of the work on the thesis during this vacation is strongly recommended to reduce the workload in the second, final, year.

Thesis

The thesis must be presented in a lucid and scholarly manner, and need not be original research. Your supervisor provides assistance, primarily in choosing a topic for the thesis and with bibliography, but essentially the thesis is expected to be the student's own independent work. Students will be expected to begin work on their theses by Trinity Term of Year 1 and a considerable amount of work should be undertaken during the Long Vacation between years. Completing the bulk of the work on the thesis during this vacation is strongly recommended to reduce the workload in Year 2. All theses must include a substantial cuneiform-related element.

Teaching Staff
- Dr Moudhy Al-Rashid, Junior Research Fellow, Wolfson College
- Dr Paul Collins, Jaleh Hearn Curator for Ancient Near East, Ashmolean Museum; Fellow of Jesus College and Wolfson College

- Prof. Jacob Dahl, Professor of Assyriology; Fellow of Wolfson College
- Dr Linda Hulin, Research Assistant, Oxford Centre for Maritime Archaeology, Wolfson College
- Dr Marie-Christine Ludwig, Associate sub-faculty member, Instructor in Assyriology
- Dr Christopher Metcalf, Associate Professor in Classical Languages and Literature, Fellow of The Queen's College
- Dr Frances Reynolds, Shillito Fellow in Assyriology, The Queen's College
- Prof. Yuhan Vevaina, Bahari Associate Professor of Sasanian Studies, Fellow of Wolfson College

The Professor of Assyriology and the Shillito Fellow in Assyriology provide most of the teaching for the MPhil in Cuneiform Studies.

Examination and Assessment Structure

Year 1

You will sit two examinations on Akkadian language in Trinity Term. You must pass these in order to progress onto Year 2 of the course.

Year 2

You will complete two essay submissions in Michaelmas and Hilary Terms. Topics are published in Week 8 and due in Week 9 of each term. You will also sit four written examinations in Trinity Term and submit your thesis.

Important dates and deadlines

When			What	How/format
Year 1	Trinity Term	End of term	Cuneiform world in context: optional paper selection due.	Email: academic.administrator@orinst.ox.ac.uk
Year 1	Trinity Term	TBC	Qualifying examinations.	In-person or online examination.
Year 2	Michaelmas Term	Week 8, Thursday, 12 noon	Michaelmas submission: topics **published.**	Via Inspera.
Year 2	Michaelmas Term	Week 9, Thursday, 12 noon	Michaelmas submission: essay **submitted.** **Word limit:** 2,500.	Via Inspera.
Year 2	Hilary Term	Week 0, Monday	Approval of the thesis subject/thesis title.	Email: academic.administrator@orinst.ox.ac.uk
Year 2	Hilary Term	Week 8, Thursday, 12 noon	Hilary submission: topics **published.**	Via Inspera.

Year 2	Hilary Term	Week 9, Thursday, 12 noon	Hilary submission: essay **submitted. Word limit:** 2,500.	Via Inspera.
Year 2	Trinity Term	Week 2, Thursday, 12 noon	Thesis **submission Word limit:** 25,000	Via Inspera.
Year 2	Trinity Term	TBC	Final examinations.	In-person or online examination.

Thesis

Approval of Thesis Subject/Title

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

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

Word Limits

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

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

Language Learning and Competency Standards

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

EXAMINATIONS AND ASSESSMENT GUIDANCE

Examination Regulations, Conventions and Rubrics

Examination Regulations

Examination Regulations are the immutable framework of study and assessment of University degrees to which students must adhere. The regulations for the MPhil Cuneiform Studies can be found here (https://examregs.admin.ox.ac.uk/Regulation?code=domopitfoaamiddeaststud&srchYear=2022&srchTerm=1&year=2022&term=1).

Examination Conventions and Rubrics

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

Conventions

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

Rubrics

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

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

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

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

Examination Entry, In-person and Online Examinations

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

In-person Examinations

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

<u>Online Examinations</u>
Online exams are taken in Inspera. You must familiarise yourself with the system prior to taking an online exam. There are a wide range of resources to help you on the Oxford Students website, including expectations regarding standards of behaviour and good academic practice for online open-book exams (www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams/online-exams). Online exams require you to adhere to the University's Honour Code (www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams/open-book/honour-code) and you should read this in advance of any online exams.

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

Submissions via Inspera

Submissions are via the University's online assessment platform, Inspera. Ensure you are familiar with the online submission process in advance of any deadline. Full information is provided on the Oxford students website (www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams/submission).

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

Problems Completing Your Assessments

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

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

<u>Mitigating circumstances notices to examiners (MCE)</u>

The form is designed so that you can make the Board of Examiners aware of any problems that occurred before or during your exams, or in relation to your submitted coursework, that seriously affected your performance. For further information about mitigating circumstances, please refer to the rubrics and to the Oxford students website.

Vivas and Resits

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

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

Infringements for Examinations and Submitted Assessments

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

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

Feedback on Learning and Assessment

Informal (Formative) Assessment

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

Formal (Summative) Assessment

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

Examiners' Reports and Previous Exam Papers (OXAM)

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

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

Good Academic Practice and Avoiding Plagiarism

Plagiarism

The University's definition of plagiarism is:

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

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

You should refer to the University's guidance on referencing (https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills/referencing). If, after having done so, you

are still unsure how to reference your work properly, you should contact your supervisor for guidance.

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

MESOPOTAMIAN AND ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN RESOURCES IN OXFORD

The Sackler Library

The Sackler Library has excellent library resources for Mesopotamia and the Ancient Near East, including language, literature, history, and archaeology. The areas covered include Akkadian, Sumerian, Hittite, Elamite, Old Persian, Hurrian, and Ugaritic. The Sackler Library has a wide scope and integrates collections for the entire ancient Near East, including Egypt, and the ancient Mediterranean.

Ashmolean Museum

The Ashmolean Museum reopened in November 2009 after a major redevelopment. The Museum has an extensive and notable collection of Ancient Near Eastern and Egyptological antiquities, including the most important collection of cuneiform tablets in the U.K. after the British Museum. Students are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the collections and to learn how to read and copy from original clay tablets. The wide range of other Mesopotamian artefacts in the Museum includes finds from excavations at Kish, currently being studied by the Kish Project at the Field Museum, Chicago.

Projects either based or with teams at the University of Oxford include:

- The Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative (CDLI)
  A joint project of the University of California at Los Angeles, the University of Pennsylvania, The Max Planck Institute for the History of Science at Berlin, and the University of Oxford. The CDLI represents the efforts of an international group of Assyriologists, museum curators and historians of science to make available through the internet the form and content of cuneiform tablets dating from the beginning of writing, ca. 3350 BC, until the end of the pre-Christian era. We estimate the number of these documents currently kept in public and private collections to exceed 500,000 exemplars, of which now nearly 350,000 have been catalogued in electronic form by the CDLI.
- The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature (ETCSL)
  A project of the University of Oxford, comprises a selection of nearly 400 literary compositions recorded on sources which come from ancient Mesopotamia (modern Iraq) and date to the late third and early second millennia BCE. The corpus contains Sumerian texts in transliteration, English prose translations and bibliographical information for each composition. The transliterations and the translations can be searched, browsed and read online using the tools of the website. We are currently working on the integration of the ETCSL and the CDLI.

The Oxford University Press has a strong tradition of publishing books on the ancient Near East written by scholars associated with the University. Most recent titles include:

- F. Reynolds, A Babylon Calendar Treatise: Scholars and Invaders in the Late First Millennium BC: Edited with Introduction, Commentary, and Cuneiform Texts (2019)
- C. Metcalf, The Gods Rich in Praise Early Greek and Mesopotamian Religious Poetry (2015)
- S.Y. Chen, The Primeval Flood Catastrophe: Origins and Early Developments in Sumerian and Babylonian Traditions, 2013.
- S.M. Dalley, The Mystery of the Hanging Garden of Babylon (2013)
- D. Wengrow, What makes civilisation?: the ancient near East and the future of the West (2010)

The Oxford University Press has recently relaunched the series Oxford Editions of Cuneiform Texts, under the editorship of Prof. J. L. Dahl and Prof Heather Baker (Toronto).

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

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

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

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

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

Complaints

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

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

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

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

Academic appeals

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

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

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

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR THESIS WRITERS

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

Status of the thesis within the degree course

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

Planning and Choice of Topic

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

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

The Thesis Supervisor's Role

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

Theses - Good and Indifferent

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

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

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

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

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

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

Format of the Thesis

a. *Length*

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

b. *Pagination*

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

c. *Order of Contents*

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

  i.   A table of contents, showing, in sequence, with page numbers, the subdivisions of the thesis. Titles of chapters and appendices should be given; titles of subsections of chapters may be given.
  ii.   A list of illustrations (if appropriate)
  iii. A list of tables (if appropriate)

iv.   A list of abbreviations, cue-titles, symbols etc.

v.   A brief introduction in which the examiners' attention is drawn to the aims and broad argument(s) of the work, and in which any relevant points about sources and obligations to the work of other scholars are made.

vi.   The thesis itself, divided into chapters. The chapters should have clear descriptive titles.

vii.   A conclusion, consisting of a few hundred words which summarize the findings and briefly explore their implications.

viii.   Any appendices (which are likely not to count towards the word limit)

ix.   A bibliography. This is essential, and should be sensibly selective, omitting nothing which has been important in the production of the thesis. Works which are not specifically mentioned in the text may be included, but it is not necessary to include everything that may have been read or consulted. Works should be listed alphabetically by surname of author.

d. *Footnotes, References, and Bibliography*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

f. *Italics*

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

g. *Capitals*

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

h. *Emphasis.*

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

i. *Spelling*

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

j. *Transliteration*

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

k. *Submission*

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

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

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

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

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

The MPhil is available in the following subjects:

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

Educational Aims of the Programme

The programme aims to enable its students to:

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

Assessment

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

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

Programme Outcomes

A. Knowledge and understanding

On completion of the course students will have:

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

Related Teaching/Learning Methods and Strategies

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

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

B. Skills and other attributes

1. Intellectual Skills

The ability to:

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

Teaching/Learning Methods and Strategies

As above.

Assessment

As above.

2. Practical Skills

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

3. Transferable Skills

The ability to:

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

Teaching/Learning Methods and Strategies/Assessment

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

Assessment

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

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