UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSIONS AND OUTREACH
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Physics (BA) (three-year course); (MPhys) (four-year course) Course Information Sheet for entry in 2026

Entry requirements

Visit Admission requirements for 2026 entry to view a summary table of each undergraduate course's entry requirements.

If English is not your first language you may also need to meet our English language requirements.

About the course

Physics is concerned with the study of the universe from the smallest to the largest scale: it is about unravelling its complexities to discover the way it is and how it works.

Discoveries in physics have formed the foundation of countless technological advances and play an important role in many scientific areas. Many techniques used in medical imaging, nanotechnology and quantum computing are derived from physics instrumentation. Even the World Wide Web was a spin-off from the information processing and communications requirements of high-energy particle physics.

The contributions of physics to solving global problems such as energy production, environmental protection, global warming and public health are essential and have an enormous impact on our society.

Oxford has one of the largest university physics departments in the UK, with an outstanding and very diverse research programme in six sub-departments:

- Astrophysics
- Atmospheric, Oceanic and Planetary Physics
- Atomic and Laser Physics
- Condensed Matter Physics (including BioPhysics)
- Particle Physics
- Theoretical Physics.

Physics at Oxford is challenging and mathematical with a strong emphasis on fundamental concepts such as optics and relativity.

There are two undergraduate courses, an MPhys and the BA. All applicants apply for the four-year MPhys in the first instance. The fourth-year MPhys option courses bring you to the threshold of current research, and can lead to subject specialism.

The department is equipped with state-of-the-art lecture facilities and teaching laboratories. Tutorials give students direct and regular access to physicists actively involved in research and provide an opportunity to explore scientific ideas with experts in the field.

Project work/international opportunities

In the third year, all students carry out a short project in the teaching laboratories. Students on both the BA and MPhys may have the opportunity to do industry projects investigating a real physics problem. There is further flexibility to undertake computational and experimental projects.

A wide choice of fourth-year MPhys projects is available across all six physics sub-departments.

A typical week

In the first year your time will be equally divided between mathematics and physics, with about ten lectures and two tutorials a week, plus one day a week working on experimental physics in the practical laboratories.

In the second and third years the core and mainstream physics topics are covered in tutorials and small group classes. Practical work is also done during the year.

In the fourth year you will take two major options and the MPhys project.

Tutorials are usually given in colleges with 2-4 students and a tutor. Fourth year class sizes may vary depending on the options you choose. There would usually be no more than around 20 students though classes for some of the more popular papers may be up to 40 students.

Most tutorials, classes, and lectures are delivered by academics who are specialists in their subject. Many are world-leading experts with years of experience in teaching and research. Some teaching may also be delivered by postgraduate students who are studying at doctoral level.

To find out more about how our teaching year is structured, visit our Academic Year page.

Significant self-study is expected of all students – for further details see workload and independent study information. Undergraduate courses at Oxford are full-time during term time. Students typically spend approximately 40 hours per week on academic work.

Course structure

Year 1	
CURRENT COURSES • Classical mechanics and special relativity • Electromagnetism, circuit theory and optics • Mathematical methods I • Differential equations and waves Short options, for example: • Astronomy • Complex analysis • Quantum ideas	**ASSESSMENT** First University examinations: four written papers; short option paper; satisfactory laboratory work

Year 2	
CURRENT COURSES • Thermal physics • Electromagnetism and optics • Quantum physics • Mathematical methods II Short options, for example: • Classical mechanics • Climate physics • Introduction to biological physics	**ASSESSMENT** Final University examinations, Part A (BA and MPhys): three written papers; short option paper; laboratory work; individual presentation

Year 3	
CURRENT COURSES • Fluids • Symmetry and relativity • Atomic and laser physics • Nuclear and particle physics • General relativity • Condensed-matter physics • Computational and experimental projects Short options, for example: • Advanced quantum mechanics • Classical mechanics • Plasma physics	**ASSESSMENT** Final University examinations, Part B: MPhys: Part A plus up to five written papers, short option paper, mini project, laboratory work; BA: Part A plus up to four written papers, short option paper, mini project, laboratory work, project report, optional industrial project

Year 4	
RESEARCH Project and two option courses: • MPhys project Current major options:	**ASSESSMENT** Final University examinations, Part C (MPhys): project report; two major option papers

Year 4	
• Astrophysics • Laser science and quantum information processing • Condensed matter • Particle physics • Atmospheres and oceans • Theoretical physics • Biological physics	

More information about current options is available on the Physics website.

Exams are taken in June at the end of each year of the courses. Most written papers are of 2.5- or 3-hours duration. Short options are shared across Years 1–3 and are examined by a 1.5-hour paper; the titles shown are illustrative and may change from year to year of the course.

First year examinations are often called Prelims or Moderations, and you need to pass these exams to progress to the second year. You must pass your final year exams, or 'finals', to pass your degree. For more information on assessment for your course, please see the Course Structure.

Finals also determine the classification of your degree. For some courses you may also be assessed on your practical work, or you may be required to submit a dissertation. Please check the assessment details for your course.

The University will seek to deliver this course in accordance with the description set out above. However, there may be situations in which it is desirable or necessary for the University to make changes in course provision, either before or after registration. For further information, please see the University's Terms and Conditions and information about potential course changes.

You are also referred to the Student Handbook (which is updated every September).

Fees

These annual fees in 2026/27 are for full-time students who begin this undergraduate course here in 2026. Information about how much fees and other costs usually increase each year is set out in the University's Terms and Conditions.

For details of annual increases, please see our guidance on likely increases to fees and charges.

Fee status	Annual Course fees in 2026/27
Home	£9,790
Overseas	£62,820

In the 2027-28 academic year course fees for Home fee status students will rise to £10,050 (in line with the government fee cap.)

Further details about fee status eligibility can be found on the fee status webpage.

Living costs

Living costs for the academic year starting in 2026 are estimated to be between £1,405 and £2,105 for each month you are in Oxford. Students at Oxford can benefit from our world class resources and college provision, which may help to keep costs down. Entitlement to certain types of support may depend on your personal financial circumstances.

Our academic year is made up of three eight-week terms, so you would not usually need to be in Oxford for much more than six months of the year but may wish to budget over a nine-month period to ensure you also have sufficient funds during the holidays to meet essential costs. For further details please visit our living costs webpage.

Living costs breakdown

	Per month		**Total for 9 months**	
	Lower range	Upper range	Lower range	Upper range
Food	£315	£545	£2,835	£4,905
Accommodation (including utilities)	£825	£990	£7,425	£8,910
Personal items	£160	£310	£1,440	£2,790
Social activities	£50	£130	£450	£1,170
Study costs	£35	£90	£315	£810
Other	£20	£40	£180	£360
Total	**£1,405**	**£2,105**	**£12,645**	**£18,945**

In order to provide these estimated likely living costs (which are rounded to the nearest £5), the University in collaboration with the Oxford SU conducted a living costs survey in May 2025 to complement existing student expenditure data from a variety of sources, including the UK government's Student Income and Expenditure Survey and the National Union of Students (NUS).

The current economic climate and periods of high national inflation in recent years make it harder to estimate potential changes to the cost of living over the next few years. When planning your finances for any future years of study in Oxford beyond 2026-27, it is suggested that you allow for potential increases in living expenses of around 4% each year – although this rate may vary depending on the national economic situation.

Additional Fees and Charges Information for Physics

There are no compulsory costs for this course beyond the fees shown above and your living costs.

Regulation - The University of Oxford is regulated by the Office for Students and subscribes to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education student complaints scheme.