



Ruskin School of Art Frequently Asked Questions – Postgraduate Admissions

Timeline for Admissions, entry in 2024-25

1 Sep 2023	Application form available https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/courses/courses-a-z-listing
5 Jan 2024	Application deadline
Early/Mid-Feb 2024	Shortlisting decisions & interviews for shortlisted candidates
Mid-Late Feb 2024	Decisions announced to applicants
Mid-April 2024	Offer holders indicate their initial acceptance
April-June 2024	Central funding decisions
By 31 st Aug 2024	Offer holders fulfil their academic & financial conditions or withdraw
7 Oct 2024	Inductions start

Please note that there are currently no plans to hold a Graduate Open Day for DPhil study, but we will be offering an online info session for MFA applicants:

<https://www.rsa.ox.ac.uk/study/mfa>

Main contact for Postgraduate Admissions queries:

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Course practicalities & requirements

What degree should I have to be eligible?

Many of our prospective students have backgrounds in non-arts related fields but a keen interest in Art. Ordinarily we would expect a student to have formal qualifications in the Arts but if they don't then we expect that their portfolio and

proposal, the main components by which we evaluate their application, will demonstrate a committed engagement with visual arts and awareness of debates associated with Contemporary Art. So, if you have a strong portfolio of work that reflects your interest in the intersection of Art and other subjects, and a strong enough supporting statement of evidencing awareness of contemporary debates about that topic, then we would be happy for you to apply.

The Admissions Panel place a greater emphasis on the strength on your portfolio and your written statement than they do your previous academic qualifications. We do have successful MFA candidates who do not have an Art or Fine Art degree.

You need to have at least a BA to apply.

My GPA is a bit lower than is required. Should I still apply?

The assessors look at individual marks on your transcript. Should your overall GPA be lower than our requirements state, but your **individual marks for Fine-Art related subjects** are outstandingly high, we would still consider your application.

My university counts GPAs differently. Are my results good enough?

We require a minimum GPA of 3.75 out of 4.0.

If your university calculates the GPA differently, you would have to work out a similar percentage.

The University offers general guidance on the types of qualifications and grades from countries outside the UK that would usually be considered to meet its minimum entry requirements. You can find guidance on international qualifications [here](https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/international-applicants/international-qualifications?source=coursepage&wssl=1):
<https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/international-applicants/international-qualifications?source=coursepage&wssl=1>

Can I study by distance-learning?

No, the Ruskin does not offer any distance learning courses.

Do you offer part-time courses?

We now only offer the MFA as a full-time option. The DPhil, however, is available as a part-time option.

Do I have to start in October?

Yes, you must start in October

Do I have to live in Oxford?

FULL-TIME STUDENTS:

The University's residence policy requires registered graduates to live within a 25 miles radius from Oxford City Centre (Carfax Tower) during term time

Under exceptional circumstances (such as an established family home of mature students) the University authorities may grant a dispensation from this residence requirement

PART-TIME STUDENTS (DPhil only):

No, you do not need to live in Oxford.

However, when studying part-time, you will be fully integrated into the research culture of the University and expected to attend the University on a regular basis for supervision, study, skills training and participation in some of the many research seminars.

This will translate in most cases roughly to attending Oxford two days a week during full term. For those working alongside their studies, the School appreciates that you will have non-standard attendance and work patterns.

The Application Process

What is the deadline for applications?

The application deadline is 12 noon (UK time) on 5th January 2024 for entry in October 2024. We strongly advise that you submit your application before Christmas 2023, so that any issues with the application may be resolved before the deadline.

How do I apply to do a postgraduate degree at the Ruskin?

Applications are made online. Guidance is provided in these links:

DPhil (DPhil is the name for a PhD that is used at the University of Oxford)

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/courses/dphil-fine-art>
<https://www.rsa.ox.ac.uk/study/dphil/dphil-programme>

MFA

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/courses/mfa-fine-art>
<https://www.rsa.ox.ac.uk/study/mfa>

And:

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/applying-to-oxford/application-guide>

Do I need to contact a potential supervisor before applying? (DPhil only)

No – unlike at many other universities, you do not need to contact a potential supervisor before you submit your application. Admission to the DPhil programme is organised centrally at the Ruskin, so there is no need to discuss your project with a proposed supervisor in advance. We are a small School, and this ensures the admission process is as fair and equitable as possible. If your application is

successful, your supervisor(s) will be appointed before you begin your programme of study.

Can I nominate a preferred supervisor on my application form? (DPhil only)

Yes – but the School cannot guarantee that your preferred supervisor will be available for supervision.

Can I apply for more than one programme in the University?

Yes, however you will have to pay the application fee for each application.

Will applying for more than one programme count against me?

No. All your applications will be assessed separately and independent of any other.

Which college should I choose?

If you are applying for a college award (see [Funding Search](#)) you are usually expected to nominate that particular college as your preference.

You are not guaranteed an offer from your preferred college.

You have the option of indicating that you have **no particular college preference** which will mean that your application, once the School has made you an offer, will be directed to one of the colleges that still has places available.

Do I need to be at the same college as my supervisor?

No. This does not apply to graduate students.

Students actually find it useful to be in a different college from their supervisor, as in addition to their supervisor they will also have a college advisor who can provide additional support and guidance.

Can I apply for an application fee waiver?

Applicants from low income households and/or countries should have a look here for information: <https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/applying-to-oxford/application-guide/declaration-and-payment#content-tab--3>

Questions about submitted documents

Can a member of staff read or check through my submission / proposal / portfolio?

No – feedback cannot be provided on prospective applications. The School receives a very large number of submissions and it is not possible to comment on individual proposals. Instead, you are encouraged to apply through the online system so that your project can be properly considered by a panel of assessors.

How do I submit my portfolio?

Portfolios should be hosted on a website or service that is publicly accessible via the internet (such as Vimeo, YouTube, Flickr, or your own website). The URL and the password for the portfolio should be included on a separate page in the “written work” (DPhil) or “written statement of purpose” (MFA) material to accompany your application. We will not accept any portfolios submitted via email or portfolios uploaded in a PDF file.

Do I need three academic references?

Yes, we normally require three academic references. Your application will only be accepted if at least two of your references were received by the relevant application deadline. Please ask your referees to check their Junk Folders after you submitted the reference section

In the case of mature students two academic references and one professional reference are acceptable.

What transcript do I need to submit?

We require a transcript that shows the **individual marks for all your subjects**.

If you already have a final transcript of your previous degree, you can submit a PDF copy of it with your application – this will need to be a scan of the original official transcript.

If you are currently enrolled in a degree programme and therefore do not have a final transcript yet, you should submit an interim transcript showing individual marks for all your subjects. In this case, the offer of a place at Oxford will be conditional, asking you to achieve a certain level of performance in your examination results and to provide us with a final transcript when it is produced at the end of the academic year.

If made an offer, we will need the original (hard copy) of your transcript for our records before we can confirm our offer.

What is an official transcript?

An official transcript is the original document showing all your marks to-date, in hard copy, usually bearing a stamp and a signature from the awarding institution.

It is **NOT** an online printout, photocopy (even colour) or your degree certificate.

Please consult the University's [Application Guide](#) about their requirements and definitions.

Can you return my transcript?

We do not usually return transcripts, as we need to keep them to prove that we have had the evidence for a student's admission to the programme, should we ever be audited.

We can sometimes make exceptions if a transcript is irreplaceable for a special reason.

Language

Do I need a Language Certificate?

If you are not a native English speaker or are not from a majority English-speaking country¹, we will require you to provide us with a language certificate. For required scores see the University's information on language skills (History applicants need to achieve test results at the higher level).

How do I apply for the English Language Waiver?

To request a waiver please answer the questions in the online application form. You can apply for a waiver if you have completed more than twelve months of a degree programme at an English-speaking university. In this case, please also ask your referees to comment explicitly on your English language skills in their references. See more information on this here: [language test waiver](#).

If you have substantial professional experience a language waiver may also be granted, and you must provide further details of your employment to support your request.

Please note that we might still ask you to take an English language test, should we for any reason have doubts about your English language competence, or if your current academic institution is not recognised as an English language teaching environment for visa requirements by the UK Border Agency.

Can I submit my language certificate after submitting my application?

If you need more time to improve your English and want to take your English test after submitting your application, you can do this.

Ideally we would like to have your language certificate by mid-February for January applications (but the test result can also be considered as an academic condition to be fulfilled by 31st July).

¹ The Home Office English speaking majority countries are Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Canada, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Malta, New Zealand, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, United States of America.

My language test score is lower than required. What do I do?

For required scores on language tests, see the University's information on [language skills](#) (History applicants need to achieve test results at the higher level).

If you do not reach these scores, you can still try to improve your English language skills during the assessment process. Please state in your application that you are intending to re-take your English language test later to try to improve the score

You can then send in your new language test certificate to be added to your application documents to graduate@rsa.ox.ac.uk

Funding

What funding is available?

A guide to funding is provided here: <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/fees-funding>

Most Oxford scholarships are awarded between March and June. The approximate date by which decisions are expected to be made will normally be given in the relevant scholarship information, all linked through Fees, Funding and Scholarship Search (same link as above). **Only successful applicants are notified of the outcome.**

DPhil:

Please note that should you wish to apply for the Open-Oxford-Cambridge Doctoral Partnership (AHRC) you must complete the application form at the same time as you submit your application. <https://oocdtp.web.ox.ac.uk/> Applications cannot be accepted after this point.

The School strongly recommends that you look for alternative forms of funding since only limited funding is available through the University. Funding is not guaranteed when offered a place on the MFA/DPhil programme, and funding for master's courses in the Humanities is notoriously scarce.

Can I work while studying?

FULL-TIME STUDENTS:

Our full-time programmes do anticipate a commitment to their study, equivalent to a full-time job (40 hours a week).

Sometimes students may have access to part-time or casual work alongside their course work, but we strongly advise our graduates that they **should not commit**

themselves to more than six hours per week on average. Visa holders have restrictions as to the numbers of hours they are allowed to work.

PART-TIME STUDENTS (DPhil only):

If you are on a part-time course and in employment, you must provide a letter from your employer stating you may take time off if necessary to attend the University as required for the duration of the course.

Do I need to fill in separate applications for different scholarships?

The Clarendon scholarship does not require a separate application.

Applications for AHRC funding, via [The Open-Oxford-Cambridge Doctoral Partnership \(OOC DTP\)](#), require a separate form to be completed and uploaded as part of the application.

AHRC, ESRC and Clarendon applications are initially assessed by the School who then submits a list of nominees for review by the relevant Divisional panels.

All internal funding (School and college-linked awards) is done through the Faculty. In most cases no separate application is necessary.

Some of the named scholarships on the application form and virtually all college-based scholarship will require some additional material (please check the scholarships <https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/fees-and-funding/oxford-funding> section on the University website).

When will I know if I have received funding?

Once nominations have been agreed successful candidates will be informed in late March / early April of the outcome and in due course be asked for any additional information which may be required for the documentation which has to be submitted to the relevant funding body.

While the University aims to keep applicants informed about funding decisions it is not always possible to inform everyone individually that their funding application has been unsuccessful; the huge numbers of applicants for Clarendon and AHRC funding, for instance, make this task fairly unmanageable (in those cases the University places a summary announcement on the relevant webpage indicating that all successful candidates have been contacted, and that those who have not been contacted need to assume that their application was unsuccessful).

I have not been offered funding from the main funding bodies. What do I do now?

In parallel to AHRC, ESRC, and Clarendon funding eligible candidates will also have been considered for the School's departmental and college-linked awards, and additional awards may only become available if one or more of the nominees for such awards for unforeseen reasons have to withdraw from their Oxford award.

In consequence, we need to advise you that you need to investigate your alternative financial options if you have not been offered one of the major awards in April.

I can't get enough money together to come to Oxford. What do I do?

If you realise that you are unable to finance your studies at Oxford, please contact us at graduate@rsa.ox.ac.uk and your college to tell us that you are withdrawing from your place.

After Applying – your offer & college

If I am offered a place, can I defer entry to the following year?

You can only defer if you have fulfilled your Financial Conditions with the college, and only if both the School and the College give permission.

If I accept the offer, is it binding?

No. The initial offer letter constitutes a formal offer of a place at the University of Oxford and when you accept it, you will enter into a contract with the University. This is not a binding contract, but gives us an indication as to whether you have the intention of coming to Oxford, should you be able to fulfil any academic and financial conditions.

Please email us as soon as possible should you change your mind at any point, up until all conditions are fulfilled and you get the final offer letter and card form. If you need to withdraw before then, we would appreciate it if you would provide a reason for not wishing to take up your place at Oxford. If you choose to accept an offer from another university, it would be helpful if you told us where you will be going instead.

I have a conditional offer, what do I need to do?

You will need to meet the conditions set out in your offer letter by the date specified.

If you cannot meet the conditions by the given deadline (usually 31st July), please get in touch with us and let us know when we can expect the required documents to meet the conditions of your offer.

Now I have received an offer, what will happen next?

You will next hear from a college offering you a place. Please note that this could take some time (up to 10 weeks after being offered a place), if your preferred college has no capacity for additional students. We guarantee a college place for everyone who has been made an offer by the School.

You will have to work towards satisfying the academic (if any) and college conditions for your offer. The college will give you a separate deadline for the fulfilment of financial conditions (often the end of August).

Once all conditions are fulfilled, you will be sent a confirmation letter and a Card Form by us, which you will have to sign and return in the post.

If you need a visa: after your contract is registered as having been received, we can submit our sponsorship information for your Certificate of Acceptance for Study (CAS) number which you need for your visa application. Please consider that it will take at least 1 week for the contract to reach us (depending on where you live) and at least 2 weeks to get your visa (please see also 'Visa' section below).

I still have no college placement

If your preferred college is unable to offer you a place, the University will find you a place at a college which has still capacity for your programme and subject area. This can sometimes be a time-consuming process, but if the School has made you an offer we will eventually also secure a college place.

Please note, that if your college place offer is made very late, you might not be able to get college accommodation. Also, not all colleges offer places to Ruskin students.

I have been offered a place at a college I don't like. Can I change college?

Rejecting your college place automatically means withdrawing from your place at Oxford. However, if another college awards you a scholarship, or partial award in excess of £2,000 then you will be expected to migrate to the college which is offering the award.

Can I defer my place?

Deferrals are only possible once you have fulfilled all conditions (academic and financial) AND under exceptional unforeseen circumstances:

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/after-you-apply/your-offer-and-contract>

There is no automatic entitlement to a deferral. We as the School have to agree and then make a case to Graduate Admissions and your college.

Visa

I need a visa, how does it work?

You will need a Certificate of Acceptance for Study (CAS) number to apply for the visa. We will issue a CAS request for you once you have fulfilled all conditions (academic and financial) and send you the details and number electronically so you can start your visa application.

If you change email address (when leaving another University), please make sure we have one that reaches you.

For general questions on UK immigration policy please contact student.immigration@admin.ox.ac.uk - for information about the progress of your CAS request, and any necessary update to the information we hold, please contact the School on graduate@rsa.ox.ac.uk.

CAS numbers are normally issued 3 months before the start of term, in July.

It is your responsibility to apply for the visa in good time.

More information for applicants is here <https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/international-applicants/visas-and-immigration>

Arriving in Oxford

When do I need to be in Oxford?

You need to be here one week in advance of the formal start of Michaelmas Term, for the induction week events (usually starting on the first Monday in October).

International students are encouraged to join us earlier for an orientation event by the Student Information Office (usually on the last Thursday in September).

If you have applied for a Medieval degree and/or need to enrol in the pre-term Latin course, you need to arrive in time for this pre-term course in mid-September.

What do I need to do before I arrive?

There is a checklist here <https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/after-you-apply/arriving>

Most importantly, you need to register on Student Self Service and get into the habit of checking your Oxford email account regularly.

After Applying – you were not offered a place

Can I find out why I have not been accepted?

Unfortunately, we are not able to offer individual feedback on your application due to the amount of applications that we receive.

We hope that our published criteria will give you and your referees some useful indication on how you could improve any application that you may make in the future.

Will having been rejected count against me next year?

No, your new application will be assessed without consideration of any previous applications.

I want to apply again next year. How do I improve my application?

Although you cannot do much to change the references others write for you, or your previous results, the written work/portfolio you provide and your statement of purpose can be improved.

Invest time and effort in your proposal/portfolio: make sure it is detailed and yet concise; make sure you show very clearly what you would like to focus on; give it a title or very clear direction; consult our website and look at the topics of our current (research) students to get an idea of the way projects are formulated; narrow down your topic and focus on a particular point that may have not been looked at from that angle before; only show your best work.