# Postgraduate Cost of Study Research Project

## Purpose of the Project

Tuition fees for postgraduate students at Oxford range from around 14,000 pounds, for UK students on one-year humanities courses, to over 80,000, for international students in MBA- like programs. Moreover, the university itself estimates the cost of living in the city to be around 17,000 pounds annually, yielding a minimum expenditure of over 30,000 pounds. These numbers do not account for the real cost of attendance however, which includes several expenses that are necessary for fully engaging with all the opportunities at Oxford, such as sports or art clubs’ membership fees or social events like balls. Despite this steep cost, more than half of the university’s postgraduate students are currently self-funding their studies.

There are many gaps to be filled in our knowledge of the financial burden of postgraduate study at Oxford. While many different bodies within the university gather quantitative data on or related to this subject, there have been few attempts to collect it into a single report. Further, we have only anecdotical evidence of the real impact this situation has on self-funded students, in terms of their educational experience and more general mental health. The current project will attempt to fill both gaps in a systematic way. Therefore, the main purpose of this project is to answer the following questions:

* What do we know about the financial costs of attendance at Oxford at postgraduate level?
* What are the educational experience and mental health implications of undertaking self-funded postgraduate study at Oxford?

## Information We Seek

The Student Union would welcome any information from postgraduate students relating to the questions above, and particularly about:

* The cost of attendance at Oxford as a postgraduate, including expenses the university does not consider in their calculations, such as conference fees, lab equipment or fieldwork costs.
* The availability of support across the collegiate system and the different departments and faculties, as well as the procedures to access them.
* Personal experiences of accessing hardship funds and other forms of emergency financial support.
* The mental health consequences of self-funding postgraduate studies at Oxford, especially as they intersect with other vulnerabilities.

# Postgraduate Assessment Methods Research Project

## Purpose of the Project

Despite the cohesive image that an Oxford education may evoke outside the university, grading methods and standards vary widely among different degrees. Postgraduate students, whose assessment devices are determined by the Departments and Faculties, are particularly likely to experience a range of different ones, from theses, capstone projects, closed-book written or typed exams, and open-book but timed exams. Further, the university has recently changed some of the standards in the rules for qualifying DPhil candidates, although these changes are not very well-known among the students themselves. All this variation and its impacts on students has not been rigorously studied, leading to a dearth of knowledge on best possible practices.

There are many other relevant gaps to consider in this research space. For example, assessment methods recognize and attempt to accommodate students with learning difficulties and other disabilities, but we lack information on their own experiences of this process. As artificial intelligence develops the ability to perform human tasks with increasing accuracy and reliability, it remains an open question whether assessment methods are keeping up with their potential, and whether students have changed their own behaviours. Therefore, this project aims to answer the following questions:

* What opinions do students have of the assessment methods they have encountered at Oxford?
* What do DPhil students think about the new changes put forward by the university?
* How well are accommodations for learning difficulties and disabilities incorporated into different assessment methods?
* What, if any, have been the impacts of new generative artificial intelligence models, such as ChatGPT, on assessment methods and the student experience of them?

## Information We Seek

The Student Union would welcome any information from postgraduate students relating to the questions above, and particularly about:

* The variety in assessment methods during your time at Oxford.
* Personal experiences of reporting a learning difficulty or a disability impacting your ability to complete a grade assessment, and of the university’s response.
* The impact of models like ChatGPT or DeepSeek on your approach to your assignments, or, if any, changes made to the assignments themselves.