MPhil Buddhist Studies Course Handbook

Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies

University of Oxford

Academic Year 2024-25 v.2

FACULTY OF
**ASIAN AND
MIDDLE
EASTERN
STUDIES**

UNIVERSITY OF
OXFORD

Master of Philosophy in Buddhist Studies Course Handbook

Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies

Academic Year 2024-25 v.2

Course Director – Prof. Kate Crosby

THIS HANDBOOK

This handbook applies to students starting the course in Michaelmas Term 2024. The information in this handbook may be different for students starting in other years.

The information in this handbook is accurate as at Michaelmas Term 2024; 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.

The handbook sets out the basic framework for the MPhil Buddhist 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.

The Examination Regulations relating to this course are available here: Degrees of Master of Philosophy in the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies (ox.ac.uk)

You should consult the current edition of the Examination Regulations for information regarding your course. The information in this handbook should be read in conjunction with:

- the Examination Conventions and Rubrics;
- 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. If you have any concerns please contact the Senior Academic Administrator, Edmund Howard.

Comments and criticism of the handbook are always welcome; they should be sent to the Director of Graduate Studies (Margaret Hillenbrand) or the Senior Academic Administrator.

Student Hub

The Student Hub is an ongoing project to provide a live online version of the handbook, together with more detailed course information and further resources such as forms and exam conventions, as well as archived documents from previous years. You can also access the Student Hub through the top bar of the Faculty Website, through the '**NEW Faculty Intranet**' button. You will need to log in using your SSO.

Contents

INTRODUCTION TO THE MPHIL BUDDHIST STUDIES

Introduction

The MPhil in Buddhist Studies degree is for students wishing to study Buddhism with a strong foundation in primary sources in their original languages. Language training and a broad introduction to Buddhism are the basis of the first year. The second continues with further language training while allowing students to broaden out their interests with study on, and research into, the historical and lived manifestations of Buddhism.

Buddhism is an extremely rich religious tradition, with both a long history a wide geographic spread. The programme offers a foundation in the early Buddhist teachings and traditions (most familiar from the Pāli canon, and its parallels extant in Prakrits, some Sanskrit and mainly Chinese translation), develops into the mainstream and Mahāyāna schools (found in Sanskrit, Prakrits and other translations thereof), and extends out into several broad non-Indic traditions, i.e. Southeast Asian (the Pali commentarial and vernacular traditions), East Asian Buddhism (with a major resource being the extensive Chinese canon) and Tibetan-Himalayan Buddhism (with a major resource being the extensive Tibetan canon) and, finally, globally. Students are therefore expected to ground themselves in classical texts and their doctrinal content, as they explore the diverse manifestations which evolved therefrom over the course of over two millennia. Students will become familiar with the scholarship on these aspects and Buddhist studies more broadly through more advanced courses and as they develop their own specialist skills for original research in preparing their final thesis. Students will become aware to some extent of the global history of Buddhism including how that affects the development of Buddhist studies. If they have specific interests or need other languages, including vernaculars, for their research, they should consult the course director. Please note, while examinations are based on the courses listed below, most students sit in on a selection of the wide diversity of other classes and lectures relevant to their interests, with the permission of the relevant tutor or lecturer.

Pattern of Study for MPhil in Buddhist Studies

Outline of Year 1	
Introduction to Buddhism	Language Options
Buddhism I Basic background and overview *Prof. Kate Crosby/ Dr Pyi Phyo Kyaw* 8 lectures and 4 tutorials in MT. Buddhism II/*Dr Pyi Phyo Kyaw* Developments *Prof. Kate Crosby* 8 lectures and 4 tutorials in HT; 4 tutorials in TT.	Choose ONE from the following options. 1. Classical Chinese *Dr Ted Hui* 3 hours per week classical Chinese and 1 hour specifically Buddhist Chinese in MT, HT, and TT. 2. Pali Approx. 5 hours per week in MT and HT; 2 hours per week in TT weeks 1-4 No language class in MT week 6. Usual pattern MT and HT = 1.5 hours x 3 days plus

It is recommended that you also attend the relevant overview lectures in the field (i.e. Indian history, religion and culture, History & Civilisation of Tibet & the Himalaya, Introduction to East Asian studies) – consult with course director to confirm your options.	8 x 1 hour tutorials in total across MT, HT and TT. 3. Sanskrit *Dr Victor D'Avella* Approx. 5 hours per week in MT and HT; 2 hours per week in TT *Provisional Timetable:* MT and HT MWF 9:30-11:00 and TT MW 9:30-11:00. 4. Tibetan *Prof. Ulrike Roesler* 5 hours per week in MT and HT (1 hour daily); 2 hours per week in TT.
Outline of Year 2	
Two Compulsory Papers	One Optional Paper
Choose ONE from the following Reading Buddhist Texts options. 1. Reading Chinese Buddhist texts *Contact Dr Ted Hui if you need this subject.* 2. Reading Sanskrit Buddhist texts *Prof. Kate Crosby et al* 3. Reading Tibetan Buddhist texts *Prof. Ulrike Roesler* 4. Reading Pali texts Dr Andrew Skilton AND Approaches to the study of Buddhism *Prof. Kate Crosby, Dr Bogdan Diaconescu and Dr Andrew Skilton MT and colleague HT tbc.*	Choose ONE from the following. *Languages* Second primary Buddhist language (Classical Chinese Sanskrit, Tibetan, or Pali) Advanced Readings in Chinese Buddhist Texts *tbc* Only for students taking Chinese as first primary language. *Discursive courses* History & Civilisation of Tibet & the Himalaya Only for students taking Tibetan as first primary Buddhist language. Introduction to Buddhist Philosophy The Anthropology of Buddhism (tutorial course) The Nature of Religion Any other subject approved by the Board of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies. Subject to availability.

Thesis maximum length 20,000 words

A more detailed description of courses is provided below.

Outline of Year 1 (for MPhil qualifying examinations)

Students will mainly focus on the study of their primary Buddhist language (in 2023-2024 examined options are Classical Chinese, Sanskrit, Tibetan or Pali), while at the same time acquiring a basic knowledge of Buddhist thought, history and practice (Buddhism I and II). These courses (the language option and Buddhism) are described below.

For your chosen language, please contact the course director (see below), copying in the programme director (Kate Crosby), to ensure that there is place for you in the class, which are kept to a limited size.

Classical Chinese – no first-year admissions in this stream for 2024 entry
Dr Ted Hui ming.hui@ames.ox.ac.uk
3 hours per week in Michaelmas, Hilary and Trinity

All students selecting Chinese as a primary Buddhist language are required to follow a general course in Classical Chinese for a three-hour qualifying examination at the end of the third term. Normally instruction would be the standard class in elementary Classical Chinese for undergraduates and graduates, but for students with previous knowledge it may take the form of more advanced lectures and/or text classes. Students will develop the skill of translating from Classical Chinese to English. The qualifying examination paper will consist of prepared and unprepared passages in Classical Chinese for translation into English.

Pali
Prof. Kate Crosby [kate.crosby@ames.ox.ac.uk,](mailto:kate.crosby@ames.ox.ac.uk) *Dr Andrew Skilton*
andrew.skilton@ames.ox.ac.uk *and Chong Fu* Chong.Fu@ames.ox.ac.uk
4.5 hours per week in Michaelmas (not week 6) and Hilary and 2 hours per week Trinity weeks 1-4, plus 8 x 1 hour tutorials.

The primary teaching materials for the Elementary Pali course will be provided by the tutor. For students with no background in Pali or Sanskrit, Lily de Silva's *Pali Primer* is recommended as a truly elementary introduction with plenty of simple repetition of vocabulary and can be used to get a head start before teaching begins. It is available to buy in hard copy and can also be downloaded from the internet. For a reference grammar, students should buy or have access to Steven Collins' *A Pali Grammar for Students*. For older Pali literature this can be supplemented with W. Geiger's *A Pāli Grammar*, also available for purchase and in Oxford libraries. Pali dictionaries are easily available in Oxford libraries, and the single volume dictionaries by Rhys Davids and Stede or by Buddhadatta are easily purchased and accessible on the internet. Students will be introduced to online resources and aids at the beginning of the course and will be expected to use them, as well as becoming familiar with traditional book resources.

We will move to reading real Pali texts as quickly as is reasonable. These can be selected with the particular areas of interests of the class members in mind and will be provided where possible in digital format by the tutor. Previous topics have included women, madness, death, the trans experience, Marvel heroes(!), warfare, meditation, and love stories.

Students are not expected to have studied Pali before the classes start but are advised to refresh their understanding of English grammar in order to enable clear discussion of language forms in class. Students with a background in other classical or modern inflected languages, e.g. Latin, Greek, will find they have a slight advantage. Pali will be learned as a classical literary, rather than spoken, language. It is the language of the Buddhism of South and Southeast Asia and consists of a huge corpus of literature, by no means all religious. Discussion of methodological approaches to the interpretation of the texts we read is an integral part of the course. The main core of the Pali corpus is published in the Roman alphabet, and it is therefore not necessary to learn an Asian script to read it. However, depending on student interest, it is also possible to learn one or another of the major scripts for Pali: specifically, Khmer script for Cambodia and Thailand, Burmese script for Myanmar, or Sinhala for Sri Lanka. This facilitates reading of non-Romanised texts from manuscript – i.e. engaging with the cutting edge of research in Pali literature. An introduction to the Pali manuscript collection in the Bodleian Library can also be arranged. Finally, the weekly tutorial will be used to focus in on any particular difficulties students face on the course as well as to discuss Pali and Pali culture more broadly. Background reading and a readiness to discuss and present will be expected for some of the tutorials.

Sanskrit

Dr Victor D'Avella victor.davella@ames.ox.ac.uk
Approx. 5 hours per week in Michaelmas and Hilary; 2 hours per week in Trinity
Provisional Timetable: MT and HT MWF 9:30-11:00 and TT MW 9:30-11:00

The main course book for the Elementary Sanskrit course is *Complete Sanskrit* (previously *Teach Yourself Sanskrit*) by Michael Coulson; this will be supplemented with materials provided by the class tutor. All students will need to have personal access to a copy of this textbook; it is available in many College and University libraries and can be purchased online. Previous students have also found it helpful to augment the materials in Coulson's textbook with the recent textbook The Cambridge Introduction to Sanskrit by Antonia Ruppel. For a comprehensive reference grammar, students should buy or have access to *A Sanskrit Grammar for Students* by A. A. Macdonell (https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.367471/page/n3/mode/2up) as well as Speijer's *Sanskrit Syntax* (https://archive.org/details/cu31924023201183/page/n7/mode/2up).

By the middle of Michaelmas Term, you will begin reading Sanskrit texts as part of the Elementary Sanskrit classes, alongside the language work. The following texts will be read:

- The Story of Nala and Damayantī (edition in C.R. Lanman's *A Sanskrit Reader*)
- Selections from the *Kathāsaritsāgara* (in Lanman)
- Stories from the *Hitopadeśa* (in Lanman)

- *Bhagavad-Gītā* with Śaṅkara's commentary, Books II, VI, XII and XVIII as time permits.

Texts will be provided in paper and/or electronic form by the class tutor, but students are advised to purchase or have access to Lanman's reader, which contains comprehensive vocabulary and notes. Both Lanman's reader, and Belvalkar's edition of the Bhagavad-Gītā, are freely downloadable at archive.org. Śaṅkara's commentary is available in two volumes here: vol. I, vol II. For the Bhagavad-Gītā, students may also find it useful to purchase or have access to Zaehner's edition, which contains a detailed commentary.

Students are not expected to have any knowledge of the Sanskrit language before starting the course. However, the Elementary Sanskrit course is fast moving, and students will be expected to start using Devanagari, the script in which Sanskrit is usually printed, from the outset. In addition to the Sanskrit coursebooks mentioned below, we recommend Lambert's *Introduction to the Devanagari Script* (https://archive.org/details/in.gov.ignca.3374); there are also numerous online resources, including https://ubcsanskrit.ca/lesson2/writingtutor.html and http://prakrit.info/vrddhi/lessons/02/.

A basic knowledge of English grammar, and standard grammatical terms, is also highly valuable for students starting this course. Sanskrit is taught here with the "grammar and translation" method, which makes use of advances in the disciplines of historical linguistics and philology over the last two centuries. A knowledge of the terminology of these sciences of language is essential to learning Sanskrit as it is taught in Oxford, and proves especially useful in studying the earlier layers of Sanskrit literature, the Vedas. Sanskrit has many inflected forms with numerous nominal declensions and verbal conjugations. A significant part of the Elementary Sanskrit course is taken up with memorizing them. To have a template into which to fit these inflections can help enormously; it can make the difference between struggling and progressing with confidence.

Students will therefore benefit from familiarizing themselves with the basics of English grammar and grammatical terminology — and more generally *how language works* — before the start of the course. It will be helpful to remember, for example, what it means that the subject and verb of a sentence agree in number and person; what it means that verbs also have tenses, moods, and voices, and that nouns and adjectives also have case and gender. It will be useful to remember what a participle, a gerund, a pronoun, and a subordinate clause are. And so on. Of course, some students will already be familiar with this terminology, but there is always more to learn. A useful online resource with which you can begin your review is the "Introduction to Traditional Grammar," sections 1 and 2, available on the WPWT website at Southampton University (http://www.soton.ac.uk/~wpwt/notes/grammar.htm). For a slightly more detailed overview, Chapters 2, 3, 5, 6, 8 and 9 of *All about language* by Barry Blake provide useful introductions to many of the concepts and terminology that you need to know when studying Sanskrit. Jespersen's *Essentials of English Grammar* (https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.16842/mode/2up) is also recommended.

Tibetan

Prof. Ulrike Roesler ulrike.roesler@ames.ox.ac.uk
5 hours per week in Michaelmas and Hilary; 2 hours per week in Trinity

In Michaelmas Term, the emphasis in the early stages of the course will be on the acquisition of language, with five hours of elementary Tibetan per week. Teaching will be based primarily on Nicolas Tournadre and Sangda Dorje's *Manual of Standard Tibetan* (Ithaca, Snow Lion Publications, 2003). It is expected that, within the first one or two weeks, students will have grasped the essential features of Tibetan phonology, and learned the alphabet and the principles of syllable structure. The remaining weeks of term will cover lessons 1 to 10 of the *Manual*. Homework will consist of completing the grammar exercises that follow each lesson. There will also be a brief vocabulary test each week.

In Hilary Term, students will take a 1-hour collection (formative examination) to ensure that the lessons of the first term have been retained. The aim of the language course this term is to complete and revise lessons 1-15 of the Manual, and to read a number of short pieces from different sources in modern and/or classical Tibetan. Students who take their final examination at the end of this academic year will also be introduced to the classical Tibetan language, their Tibetan Buddhist set text, and reading and speaking the colloquial language.

In Trinity Term, work on the *Manual* will continue up to lesson 20. Extracts from a range of texts will be read and knowledge of grammar further developed. Students are not obliged to attend any further classes in spoken Tibetan offered, although they are free to do so if they wish.

Introduction to Buddhism

Prof. Kate Crosby kate.crosby@ames.ox.ac.uk
Dr Pyi Phyo Kyaw pyi.kyaw@ames.ox.ac.uk
Timetable: Lecture Tuesdays 2pm, Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, Lecture Room 2; Tutorials 3-4pm Room 118 (group will be split into two, one group odd, one group even weeks).

All students will be required to attend the following series of lectures and related tutorials for Introduction to Buddhism, which is divided into two units, 'Foundations of Buddhism' in Michaelmas Term and 'Buddhism in Space and Time' in Hilary Term. Tutorials include the Proseminars, one each for Michaelmas and Hilary.

Assessment: three-hour written examination, under the name 'Aspects of Buddhist Thought and History'

Buddhism I
8 lectures and 4 tutorials in Michaelmas Term
This course deals with the origins, main doctrines and practices of Buddhism, as reflected by the surviving literature of various schools and the ongoing beliefs and practices of historical and living Buddhism. It will be broadly based on the fundamental organisational framework of the three refuges: Buddha (the Awakened one, and founder), Dharma (Truth/Teaching)

and Sangha (monastic community of monks and nuns, and lay people). Tutorials will enable students to further discuss and analyse the main topics dealt with during the course, thus representing an ideal complement to the lectures. It is hoped that in this way the students will be able to develop a critical perspective on the subject of the paper and the relevant scholarship.

Buddhism II
8 lectures and 4 tutorials in Hilary Term; 4 tutorials in Trinity Term
This course deals with Buddhism as it developed and changed in space and time. It will discuss developments in understandings of causality, no-self, the religious path and ethics; the transmission and transformation of Buddhism as it spread to different parts of the world; its relationship with the temporal power, and how some of its key values and practices influenced world culture. The tutorials will enable students to further discuss and analyse the main topics dealt with during the course, thus representing an ideal complement to the lectures. It is hoped that in this way students will be able to develop a critical perspective on the subject of the paper and the relevant scholarship.

Outline of Year 2 (for MPhil final examinations)

In the second year, students continue their study of important Buddhist canonical languages with a paper in reading Buddhist texts in the language that they specialised in during this first year (Reading Buddhist texts).

Concurrently, they study Approaches to the study of Buddhism. This will deepen their understanding of Buddhist studies through tutorials exploring fundamental aspects of its literature, thought and practice, discussing the relevant research approaches and methodological issues.

For their third paper, students are required to choose from a range of options. This could be either a language paper in a second primary Buddhist language, or a paper chosen from the list provided below. When an optional paper is shared with another degree, the regulations for the paper follow that of the home degree.

Final year thesis. Apart from taught courses, students will also work on their thesis on a topic agreed with the programme director. The maximum length is 20,000 words.

Reading Chinese Buddhist texts
William Blythe william.blythe@sjc.ox.ac.uk and Ted Ming Hui ming.hui@ames.ox.ac.uk

Probable MT timetable

Lotus Sutra Tuesdays 11-12.30 Chong Fu, AMES 118 (in Sanskrit also)

Huayan jing 華嚴經Avataṃsaka Sūtra Mondays and Fridays 2-3.30 China Studies Centre.

Students who have studied classical Chinese in their first year will now read, in two x 1.5 weekly classes, passages from Buddhist texts in Chinese (both translations from Indic originals and texts composed in Chinese). The aim of the course is to introduce students to the main linguistic and stylistic features of Buddhist Chinese literature as reflected by its various forms (translations, commentaries, treatises, historiographical works etc.).

Reading Sanskrit Buddhist texts
Prof. Kate Crosby and colleagues kate.crosby@ames.ox.ac.uk

Students who have studied Sanskrit in their first year will now read, in weekly classes, passages from Buddhist texts in Sanskrit. These texts will sample at least four different genres, content and varieties of Buddhist Sanskrit, such as non-Mahāyāna mainstream literature, Mahāyāna sutra, and Mahāyāna śāstra, biography, jātaka, drama, vinaya, Abhidharma, etc. The course aims at introducing students to the study of Buddhist literature in Sanskrit, paying particular attention to philological and doctrinal issues. We will also aim to bring script variety and manuscript work in towards the end of the course.

For 2024-2025: Kate Crosby, Dr Bogdan Diaconescu (Yogācara MT, perhaps Madhyamaka MT tbc), Chong Fu (Lotus Sutra MT, possibly Dignāga term 2), Prof Diwakar Acharya (Tantra HT), Dr Andrew Skilton (Samādhirājasūtra from manuscripts HT).

Reading Tibetan Buddhist texts – no 2nd years in this stream 2024-2025
Prof. Ulrike Roesler ulrike.roesler@ames.ox.ac.uk

In this course students will read selected passages from Tibetan Buddhist texts. The course will provide an introduction to the features of Tibetan translations from Sanskrit originals, introduce some basic Buddhist terminology in Tibetan, and give students experience in translating Buddhist texts from the Tibetan. The course will enable students to read Tibetan Buddhist literature on their own with the help of a dictionary.

Approaches to the study of Buddhism
Prof. Kate Crosby kate.crosby@ames.ox.ac.uk et al.

During the second year, students are required to take tutorials for the following paper for Approaches to the Study of Buddhism, totaling 6 tutorials over Michaelmas and Hilary Terms. This course requires extensive reading, organised along themes, in preparation for each tutorial. These tutorials include the Proseminars, a longer, student-led, mini-colloquium on our chosen theme, one each for Michaelmas and Hilary. We will have revision sessions in the first half of Trinity Term.

Assessment: A three-hour written examination.

Optional: second primary Buddhist language
The optional paper students are required to choose in their second year can be a second primary Buddhist language (Classical Chinese, Pali, Sanskrit, or Tibetan). This can be studied either at a basic or at an advanced level. The former will be assessed by a three-hour examination in the chosen second primary Buddhist language; the latter by a translation from seen and unseen texts in the chosen second primary Buddhist language, to be assessed by a three-hour examination. Students who intend to study a second primary Buddhist language at an advanced level must satisfy the Faculty Board that they possess an adequate knowledge of the chosen language.

Assessment: A three-hour written examination.

Optional: The Nature of Religion
Prof. Justin Jones and Dr Jessica Frasier (MSt in Study of Religions)

The Nature of Religion consists of the following two elements: 'Theories and Methods in the Study of Religion' and 'Themes in the Interaction between Religions.' The first part of this paper 'Theories and Methods in the Study of Religion' will require that students demonstrate an advanced understanding of the main classical and contemporary approaches to the study of religions. It will cover the work of some of the most important scholars in the field and consider the history of the field of the study of religion, through its methods and theories, over the 20th century up to the present. The paper will also assess the work of these theoretical and methodological approaches as they influence our understanding of contemporary religious developments in the modern world. The second part of this paper, 'Themes in the Interaction between Religions', will require that students demonstrate an advanced understanding of different ways in which religions interact with each other. The paper will explore various themes touching on interactions between religions including the role of inter-religious disputations in the way religions define themselves and the religious 'other'. This paper is primarily taught through 16 core class seminars taught weekly across MT and HT, for which weekly preparation will be needed.

The paper will be assessed by a three-hour examination which will be based upon the core courses 'Theories and Methods in the Study of Religion' and 'Themes in the Interaction between Religions'.

Optional: The Anthropology of Buddhism
Prof. Kate Crosby and Dr. Olivia Porter

The course aims to introduce students to the major themes in the anthropological study of Buddhism across all three major regions (south, north, east), as well as in their globalized extensions in developed countries. This option course, like all options in Anthropology, will run for the eight weeks of Hilary Term. Weekly topics:

1. Introduction: History and reception.
2. Monks, nuns, and laypeople: Gifts and merit-making rituals.
3. Monastic education.
4. Buddhist ritual in the context of non-Buddhist ritual systems.
5. Buddhism and modernity: Anti-ritual, meditation, education, reform.
6. Bhikshunis and laywomen.
7. Buddhism, the state, and violence.
8. Transnational, missionary, and globalizing Buddhism.

Assessment methods:

A. Formative assessment, including feedback arrangements to students
One book review and one essay, chosen from a list given in Week Two, due by Week 5 and Week 7 respectively. Written feedback will be provided by email and, where possible, in person by the convenor before the end of term.

B. Summative assessment
One 1,000-word book review of an ethnographic monograph on Buddhism (20%) and one 4,000-word essay (80%) from a list of 9 questions provided at the end of Week 7 of Hilary Term, both to be submitted Tuesday of Week 2 of Trinity Term.

Optional: Introduction to Buddhist Philosophy
Dr Bogdan Diaconescu and Chong Fu

This paper provides an overview of the development of Buddhist thought in India during the first millennium CE. It will focus on the four main schools of Indian Buddhism, Abhidharma, Madhyamaka, Yogācāra, and the logico-epistemological school, analysing their specific views and arguments in their historical context of intra-Buddhist discussion and debate with non-Buddhist Indian philosophical schools. The teaching for the paper consists of eight tutorials in MT and at least two in HT plus attendance at relevant lectures in MT and throughout the year. Please see Kate Crosby for details.

Assessment: A three-hour written examination.

Optional: History and Civilisation of Tibet and the Himalaya
Prof. Ulrike Roesler – you must contact Prof. Roesler in advance if you want to take this course.

This option is only available to students who take Tibetan as their first primary Buddhist language. The teaching for this paper consists of 8 lectures in Michaelmas Term and a set of 4 tutorials.

Assessment: A three-hour written examination.

Optional: Advanced Readings in Chinese Buddhist Texts
Contact Kate Crosby and Ted Hui if you would like to take this subject.
This option is only available to students who take Chinese as their first primary Buddhist language. Over the course of the year a variety of themes in Chinese Buddhism will be explored through the reading of extracts from apologetic, historiographical and geographical materials composed in China between the fifth and the thirteenth centuries. Through these materials students will examine topics including (but not limited to) the construction by Chinese Buddhists of a Buddhist history and geography of China, the composition, evolution and uses of hagiographical materials, and the role of the miraculous in the promotion of the efficacy of Buddhist teachings in China. There will also be opportunities for students to present and discuss texts of relevance to their own research.

Assessment: A three-hour written examination.

Any other subject approved by the Board of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies.

Some of these options will be subject to the availability of teaching each year.

Thesis
You should begin to think about your thesis topic early in the first year of the course. The thesis should be on some topic related to Buddhism and Buddhist studies. The thesis should

be based on extensive research in secondary sources and include a full scholarly apparatus of references and bibliography. Students are encouraged to use sources in Buddhist classical languages where possible. The thesis titles will need to be approved by the Faculty Board in your second year (dates below). Some students arrive with a topic in mind. For others, ideas for a topic arise out of the readings and classes, and discussion with their lecturers or the course director.

Ideally you will do the majority of the research for the thesis in the summer between your first and second years. This means assembling the rough outline of the bibliography by the end of the third term of the first year. Students should expect to spend the Easter Vacation of the second year finishing their theses, which must be submitted by the Thursday of the fourth week of the Trinity Term (dates below), the last term in their second year. They may ask their supervisor to read one draft of the thesis, but this draft should be in the supervisor's hands by the end of the Hilary Term of their second year. The final thesis has a maximum length of 20,000 words, including footnotes but not the bibliography/references.

TEACHING STAFF

- Prof. Kate Crosby – Programme coordinator, Buddhism I and II, Buddhist Texts in Sanskrit, Anthropology of Buddhism, Pali
- Dr Victor D'Avella – Sanskrit
- Dr Bogdan Diaconescu Buddhist Texts in Sanskrit (philosophy), Buddhist Philosophy
- Dr Jessica Frazier – The Nature of Religion
- Prof. David Gellner – The Anthropology of Buddhism
- Dr Ted Ming Tak Hui – Classical Chinese and Buddhist texts in Chinese
- Prof. Justin Jones – The Nature of Religion
- Prof. Ulrike Roesler – Tibetan, History and Civilization of Tibet
- Dr Sarah Shaw – Pali
- Dr Andrew Skilton – Pali, Buddhist Texts in Sanskrit
- Dr Szilvia Szanyi – Introduction to Buddhist Philosophy, Buddhist Texts in Sanskrit (philosophy)
- William Blythe - Buddhist Texts in Chinese
- Chong Fu - Buddhist texts in Sanskrit, Chinese and Pali, Buddhist philosophy

EXAMINATION AND ASSESSMENT STRUCTURE

Year 1

You will sit 2 written examinations in Trinity Term: *Aspects of Buddhist Thought and History* (which is Buddhism I and II), and your primary language. You must pass these examinations to continue to Year 2.

Year 2

You will complete 4 assessments: Your advanced primary Buddhist language, *Approaches to the Study of Buddhism*, and 1 other chosen option. You will also submit a thesis. You must pass all of them to be awarded the degree.

Important dates and deadlines

When			What	
Year 1	Trinity Term		Qualifying examination (language).	Written examination.
Year 1	Trinity Term		Qualifying examination (Aspects of Buddhist Thought and History).	Written examination.
Year 2	Michaelmas Term	Week 2, Monday	Approval of optional papers for final examination.	The online form can be found here.
Year 2	Hilary Term	Week 0, Monday	Submit your approval of thesis subject/ title form.	The online form can be found here.
Year 2	Hilary Term	Week 7	The Anthropology of Buddhism (optional paper): essay topics published.	Submission via Inspera.
Year 2	Trinity Term	Week 2, Tuesday	The Anthropology of Buddhism (optional paper): submission. Word limits: Book review – 1,000; Essay – 4,000.	Submission via Inspera.
Year 2	Trinity Term	Week 4, Thursday, 12 noon	Thesis submission. Word limit: not more than 20,000.	Submission via Inspera.
Year 2	Trinity Term		Final examination (language).	Written examination.
Year 2	Trinity Term		Final examination (Approaches to the Study of Buddhism).	Written examination.
Year 2	Trinity Term		Final examination (optional papers).	Written 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.

Requesting a change

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 [Exams Administration team](#), 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](#).

Word Limits

Your submissions should not exceed the word limit given in your [Examination Regulations](#) and rubrics. The word count includes text and footnotes/endnotes but excludes appendices and bibliography.

General Guidelines for Thesis Writers

Further guidance and more information about formatting can be found in the [General Guidelines for Thesis Writers](#). Examples of MPhil and MSt/MSc theses are available on the 'Exams and Assessment Information' site on [Canvas](#) or 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. Please check the Bodleian's information [here](#) to help you search for an Oxford thesis. Some theses awarded a distinction are eligible to be deposited to the Bodleian, and should your thesis be eligible, you will be contacted regarding the procedure after your results are released.

Required Handwritten Language Components

For students taking Chinese language papers, the ability to produce Chinese characters independently is an essential competence standard of this course. This means that it is necessary for students to demonstrate these skills in order to successfully complete the degree programme.

Since all available software for inputting certain target scripts on a computer includes a 'predictive text' function which cannot be turned off, using such a program would prevent examiners from understanding whether the student has achieved the required proficiency in the target language. Handwriting the script is therefore required to demonstrate that the student has reached the required level of competence, ability and knowledge of the target language.

All students will be required to handwrite these papers. Although they cannot be removed or substituted with alternative papers, and no adjustments to this mode of completion of the assessment can be made, reasonable adjustments may be available to the conditions in which the assessment is completed, such as extra time and rest breaks.

The Faculty appreciates the impact that these requirements may have on students with certain accessibility needs and works closely with the Disability Advisory Service (DAS) to provide appropriate support in line with our responsibilities under the Equality Act (2010). Support within the Faculty is available in the first instance by speaking to the designated Disability Coordinators (see *Welfare and Support* below).

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

Examination Regulations are the immutable framework of study and assessment of University degrees to which students must adhere. The regulations for the MPhil Buddhist Studies can be found here.

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 'Graduate (Taught) Examinations and Assessment' page on the Student Hub 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 [Exams Administration team](#).

Examination Entry, In-person and Online Examinations
Entering for your exams

You will be invited by email to enter for your examinations when the examination entry window opens. 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 [Exams Administration team](#) if you are unsure about what these are. Please refer to the Oxford Students website for full examination entry and alternative examination arrangements (https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams/examination-entry).

Timetable

Your personal timetable showing your papers and the dates, times and location at which they will take place will be published online at least two weeks before your first examination. If you have not received your timetable, or discover any problems such as a clash of papers, contact your college as soon as possible. It is your responsibility to ensure that you sit the correct examination and misreading of information will not be considered an acceptable reason for non-attendance.

In-person Examinations

Practical information and support for sitting in-person exams is provided on the Oxford students website (http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/exams/guidance). The majority of in-person examinations take place at either the Examination Schools or Ewert House.

Online Examinations

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(http://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.

Candidate number

A candidate number is created for examinations to ensure anonymity, and you'll find your candidate number 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.

__Do not__ put your name or student number anywhere on your submissions or written exams.

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 Exams Administration team prior to the submission deadline.

Problems Completing Your Examinations and 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.

Mitigating circumstances notices to examiners (MCE)

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

You may be required to attend a viva voce examination after you have completed your written examinations. 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.

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.

When making any travel arrangements for the post-exam period, it is your responsibility to bear in mind attendance at the viva and when resits may take place.

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.

Examiners' Reports and Previous Exam Papers

Examiners' reports from past exams are normally available from Hilary Term and will be uploaded to the 'Graduate (Taught) Examinations and Assessment' page on the Student Hub. 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 Search Oxford Libraries Online (SOLO), the online catalogue platform provided by the Bodleian Libraries.

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.

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 (Margaret Hillenbrand) 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).

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.

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

In accordance with our **Statement of Values**, the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies is committed to creating a teaching, learning, and research environment in which every member of our community – at every academic level from undergraduate to senior academic, and among library and administrative staff – can achieve their full professional potential without discrimination on the basis of age, disability, gender, marriage or civil partnership, nationality, pregnancy or parenthood, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

We welcome suggestions for making our courses more diverse and inclusive. In general, you are encouraged to tell us if you see any ways in which the courses or this handbook might be improved. Staff and students are welcome to contact the Equality and Diversity team with any suggestions or concerns:

Inner and South Asia Group Equality and Diversity Representative: Christopher Fleming

Faculty Equality and Diversity Officer: Dominic Brookshaw

WELFARE AND SUPPORT

Our community aims to encourage and support all students. The student experience at Oxford offers lots of opportunities for you to thrive, grow, and look after your own wellbeing, but we know that sometimes there can be stresses and challenges too.

We want to give you the agency to navigate welfare support, and to make your own decisions. This includes by:

- Keeping in touch with your College and Department, and letting them know if you need help
- Seeking support when needed
- Supporting your fellow students
- Registering with Disability Advisory Service for structured support if you have a disability

Should you have any concerns, or for guidance and support, please do not hesitate to contact the following people:

Disability Coordinators: Thomas Hall and **Edmund Howard**

Welfare Contact: Edmund Howard

Harassment Officers: Leyla Najafzada, **Claire Macleod** and **Laurence Mann**

Details of the range of sources of support available in the University are available from the **Oxford Students** website, including in relation to mental and physical health and disability.