

OXFORD AND THE MIDDLE EAST

2021-22



UNIVERSITY OF
OXFORD





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Note:

This brochure does not reflect the changes to the University's activities caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which in particular has affected teaching arrangements, fieldwork, and access to libraries and museums. Continually updated information on Oxford's pandemic response and COVID-19 research can be found at www.ox.ac.uk/coronavirus

The University of Oxford aims to advance learning by teaching and research for the benefit of society on a global scale.

Drawing strength from its distinctive, college-based structure and interdisciplinary culture, Oxford has consistently developed its capacity to generate and share knowledge. For hundreds of years the University has continued to make significant contributions to global society, culture and economics.

Oxford's expertise encompasses science, health, society and culture. In each of these areas the University has made key contributions to the advancement of knowledge.

Research carried out by Oxford's staff, students and alumni has made an enormous impact on the world over the centuries. Among the most distinctive elements of Oxford's unique profile are the University's success in spinning out companies that convert scientific research into high-tech products and services; its global network of tropical medicine laboratories, which have been at the forefront of the fight against infectious disease for decades; and its close connections with British history, philosophy, religion and literature.

The impact of Oxford's expertise in research and education is further enhanced by Oxford University Press, the world's biggest English-language academic press and English language teaching publisher.

In the coming decade the University will further expand the impact of its research and education to maintain Oxford's position as one of the world's most renowned centres of learning.

**Nobel Prizes**

Current and former Oxford staff and students had won a total of 56 Nobel Prizes by 2020, with multiple Oxford alumni and staff winning prizes in each of the six categories.

Notable Nobel laureates associated with the University include chemist Dorothy Hodgkin; economists Amartya Sen and Joseph Stiglitz; Howard Florey, a member of the team that discovered penicillin; authors VS Naipaul and TS Eliot; physicist Erwin Schrödinger; and Peace Prize recipient José Ramos-Horta.

Current and former Oxford staff and students have also won a total of 21 Fields Medals, Balzan Prizes, Rolf Schock Prizes and Abel Prizes.



A CENTRE OF LEARNING FOR MORE THAN 900 YEARS

The University of Oxford is the oldest university in the English-speaking world. The exact date of the University's foundation is not known, but teaching was taking place in Oxford by 1096. The University developed rapidly after 1167, when King Henry II banned English students from attending the University of Paris.

Despite a popular legend that University College was founded by King Alfred the Great in 872, it is now accepted that Oxford's three oldest existing colleges – University, Balliol and Merton – were founded between 1249 and 1264. Colleges continued to be founded in Oxford in the centuries that followed, with the most recent, Reuben College, being founded in May 2019.

By the late medieval period, Oxford had achieved eminence above every other seat of learning, winning the praises of popes, kings and sages. In 1355, Edward III paid tribute not only to the University itself, but also to the services to the country provided by Oxford graduates.

Since that time, the University has been at the heart of Britain's scientific, cultural, religious and political development. Oxford hosted King Charles I's counter-Parliament during the English Civil War, was the scene of famous debates about evolution, and educated almost half of Britain's prime ministers. Over the centuries Oxford's ancient teaching and research departments such as the Faculty of Divinity and Faculty of Classics have continually evolved, and have been joined by new centres for teaching and research such as the Blavatnik School of Government and the interdisciplinary Oxford Martin School. The University will continue to grow its teaching and research capabilities to meet society's ever-evolving needs.

CONNECTING BRITAIN AND THE WORLD

Emo of Friesland became the first international student at Oxford, when he travelled from Groningen (now in the Netherlands) to Oxford in around 1190. His time at the University marks the start of Oxford's long history of internationalisation: alumnus Thomas Stephens was the first recorded Englishman to visit India in 1579, while the University began collecting Chinese publications in 1604.

Oxford played a leading role in training British civil servants for service abroad from the middle of the nineteenth century. In the 1960s these courses opened up to aspiring diplomatic leaders from around the world, transforming into the Diplomatic Studies Programme, also known as the Foreign Service Programme, which still exists today. The Programme now has more than 1,200 alumni and has contributed staff to more than 140 countries' diplomatic services.



Engraving of University buildings on Broad Street, Oxford, by James Basire, from a drawing by Edward Dayes, c.1800

Oxford University Images/Museum of the History of Science

World leaders educated at Oxford

Around 60 heads of government or state, including close to half of all British prime ministers and at least 30 leaders of other nations, have either been educated or have taught at Oxford.

Notable world leaders associated with the University include: King Abdullah II of Jordan, former President of the United States Bill Clinton, King Harald V of Norway, former Prime Minister of Australia Bob Hawke, Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan, former President of Ghana John Kufuor, former President of East Timor and Nobel Peace Prize recipient José Ramos-Horta and former Prime Minister of India Dr Manmohan Singh.

A PERSONAL APPROACH TO EDUCATION

Oxford's approach to undergraduate teaching is based around the intensive Oxford tutorial: the heart of an undergraduate education at the University. The Oxford tutorial is a conversation, normally between two or three students and their tutor, who is an expert on the topic. Teaching in this way offers a level of personalised attention from academic experts that is rare even at other world-leading universities.

Tutorials are provided at Oxford's colleges. Every student is a member of a college as well as the University. The colleges are academic communities, comprehensive in their provision of education yet focused in terms of scale. They also provide libraries, study spaces and lodgings for many students, and are the hub for social life.

At their tutorials students are encouraged to go beyond the facts they have learned, developing their own theories to challenge the assumptions of their classmates and even their tutor. The tutorial makes an undergraduate education at Oxford intensive and challenging; its spirit of free inquiry and discourse is an essential expression of Oxford's culture and values. Tutorials are combined with learning through lectures, seminars and laboratory work.



Oxford University Images/John Cairns

WORLD-CLASS RESOURCES

Roughly half of Oxford's students are postgraduates. Postgraduate students are also members of a college (with the exception of those on non-matriculated courses). Although their teaching and research activities take place in their department, they also benefit from their college's resources and are able to draw upon the expertise of its interdisciplinary community, as well as the subject specialists in their department.

Education is bolstered by lectures from leading academics, some of the world's largest libraries and best-equipped laboratories, and a rich term-time schedule of public lectures, debates and screenings. Oxford students are also able to draw on the collections of the University's four museums, including the Ashmolean, the world's first university museum and one of the most-visited sites in Britain.

Oxford's postgraduate students are part of a world-renowned research community. The University's research output was rated first out of all UK universities in the Research Excellence Framework 2014, and its medical and health teaching and research has been rated best in the world for eight years running by *Times Higher Education*.

Around half of Oxford's postgraduate research students receive full or partial funding. Scholarships available to Oxford postgraduate applicants include the prestigious Clarendon Scholarships, awarded to the most promising research students, and the world-famous Rhodes Scholarships.



Above: The Weston Library

Left: Student in tutorial



Oxford admits 1st international student

Today almost 50% of students are from outside the UK



Oxford alumnus Thomas Stephens visits India

The University now employs 170 Indian faculty



Oxford welcomes its first Chinese visitor

Chinese student numbers have increased more than tenfold in the last 20 years

1096

1190

1249

1579

1636

1684



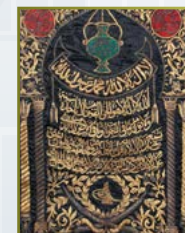
Study begins at Oxford

The oldest university in the English-speaking world



Oxford's earliest existing college is founded

The University now has 44 colleges and halls



The first Laudian Professor of Arabic is appointed

More than 70 faculty now study the Middle East

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD TIMELINE

Oxford has been a centre of learning, research and innovation for more than 900 years.



Abraham Lincoln is sworn into office on an Oxford University Press bible*

1,700 American students now study at Oxford

*Barack Obama used the same bible



Kofoworola Moore becomes the first African woman to graduate from Oxford

The University now has over 400 students from Africa



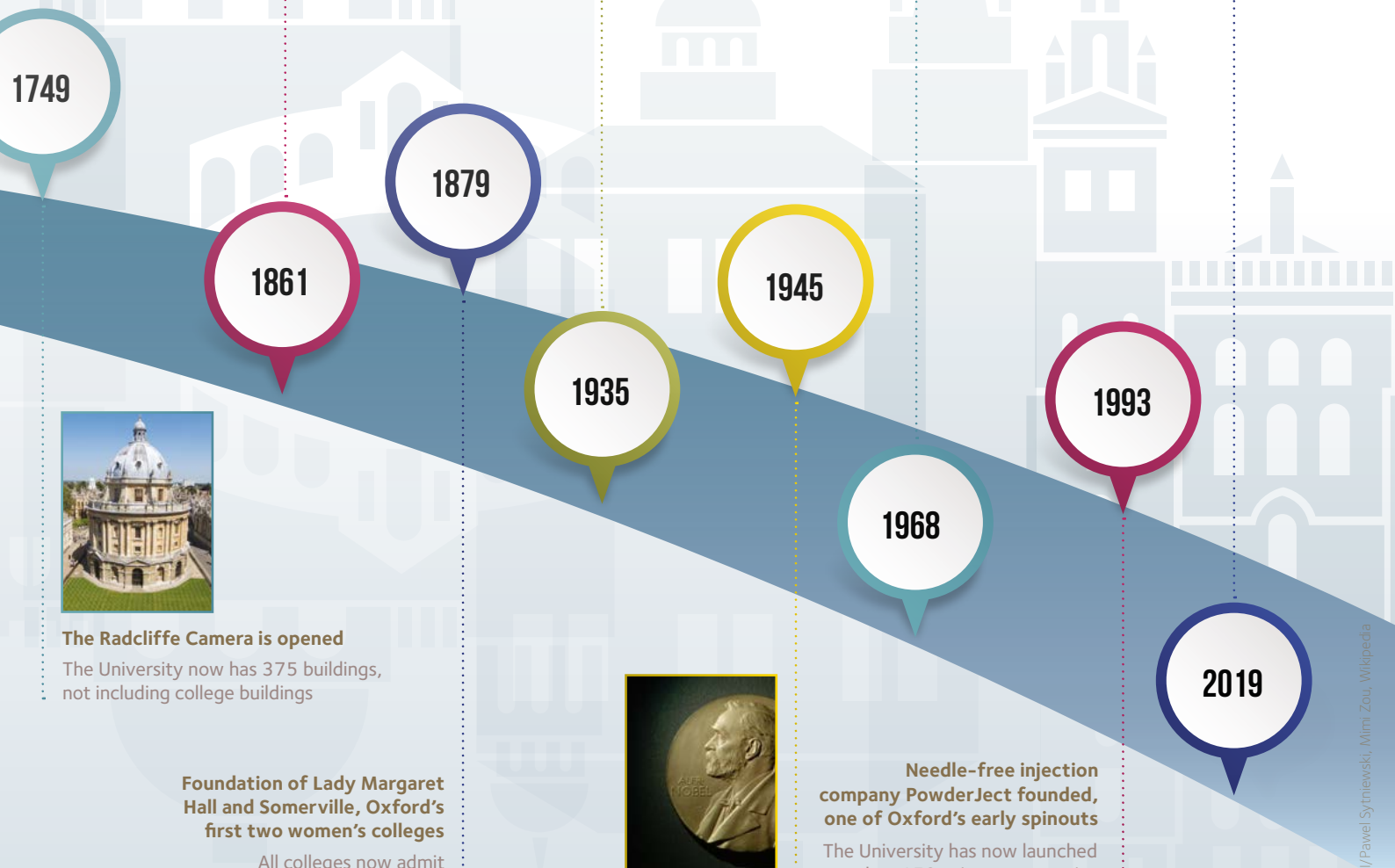
Bill Clinton is admitted to Oxford

Almost 60 heads of state or government have been educated at the University



Oxford is ranked the best university in the world by the Times Higher Education World University Rankings

The University has been ranked top every year since in 2017



1749



The Radcliffe Camera is opened

The University now has 375 buildings, not including college buildings

Foundation of Lady Margaret Hall and Somerville, Oxford's first two women's colleges

All colleges now admit both men and women



1879

1861

1935



Howard Florey awarded Nobel Prize for the discovery of penicillin

In total, Oxford staff and students have received 56 Nobel Prizes

1945

1968

Needle-free injection company PowderJect founded, one of Oxford's early spinouts

The University has now launched more than 150 spinout companies



1993

2019

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS IN A CHANGING REGION

Oxford has benefitted from its close links with the Middle East for centuries and is today one of the key western hubs for the study of the region, its history, culture and religion.

The University aspires to play an educational and research role in the ongoing development of the Middle East. Oxford has launched new scholarships for students from the region, constantly deepens its research into the Middle East, and provides bespoke consulting and training services that allow institutions in the region to draw on the University's world-class expertise in education.

The 21st century has seen the launch of new universities in several Middle Eastern countries. With these new institutions come new ways of thinking about learning and the role of research in society. In this fertile environment, Oxford continues to seek new links and further opportunities for collaborative research into the new challenges development brings.

Oxford has long been a home for the most able minds in the world, and in the years to come will continue to recruit the most excellent students, researchers and academics in the Middle East. The University is very proud of the achievements of its alumni in the region and will continue to cultivate more young minds who will contribute to the future of their countries.

A CENTRE FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STUDY

At the heart of Oxford's study of the region is the Middle East Centre at St Antony's College, housed in the landmark Investcorp Building designed by Dame Zaha Hadid.

The Centre draws together expertise on the Arab World, Iran, Israel and Turkey from across the humanities and social sciences. It was founded in 1957 and rose to prominence under the directorship of famous historian Albert Hourani. The Centre has expanded significantly in recent years, adding new fellows thanks to the support of generous donors from the region.

It moved into the award-winning Investcorp Building in 2015. The new building houses the Middle East Centre Library, with the University's primary collection of modern works, and the Middle East Centre Archive, with its extensive collection of private papers and historic photographs. Its 118-seat lecture theatre has allowed the Centre to expand its programme of seminars, lectures and debates, with many events open to the general public.

Professor Eugene Rogan is the current director of the Centre. He teaches and researches the modern history of the Middle East and has published extensively on the topic. His 2009 book, *The Arabs: A History*, has been translated into 18 languages and has been chosen as a "book of the year" by *The Economist*, *The Financial Times*, and *The Atlantic Monthly*.

Other Centre fellows include Dr Walter Armbrust, a social anthropologist who has written extensively on film and on modern Egypt; Dr Michael Willis, who specialises on comparative politics in the Maghreb; and Dr Laurent Mignon, who teaches Turkish language and literature.





Quad at St Antony's College. The Investcorp Building, which houses the Middle East Centre, can be seen on the right

THE STUDY OF MIDDLE EASTERN CULTURE AND RELIGION IN OXFORD

Scholars at Oxford are able to draw on the University's exceptional range of research and resource centres that support and bring together knowledge of Middle Eastern culture.

The **Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies** has been at the forefront of teaching, research and challenging intellectual enquiry ever since its foundation by David Patterson in 1972. Since 2018, the Centre is an integral part of Oxford University, as a research unit of the Faculty of Oriental Studies. With its own periodical, the *Journal of Jewish Studies*, and the rich collections of the Leopold Muller Memorial Library, a part of the Bodleian Library, the Centre is committed to the highest standards of academic excellence. It fosters exchange of ideas and promotes interdisciplinary discourse across the different fields and periods of Jewish life, history, languages and literature. It acts as a hub for international collaboration hosting numerous leading international scholars (more than 600 over the past almost four decades) who benefit from the outstanding resources offered by Oxford University and its colleges, libraries and museums. They contribute, in turn, through the resulting new insights and publications, to the fostering of Jewish Studies worldwide. The Centre publishes research by its fellows and visiting scholars, and participates in and supports teaching for Jewish Studies students, as well as students of a range of other degrees that can include Hebrew or Jewish Studies elements. It provides a variety of public engagement activities including teaching Biblical and Modern Hebrew and Yiddish, and holding public lectures for the broader audience of the University and beyond.

The **Khalili Research Centre** is the University's centre for research and teaching about the art and material culture of the Islamic societies of the Middle East and of their non-Muslim members and neighbours. It is part of the Faculty of Oriental Studies.

The Centre's research has included work on inscriptions from pre-Islamic Arabia, trade between the Middle East, China and Europe, and the multicultural society that existed in Sicily from the 11th to the 13th centuries.

The **Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies**, an institution for the study of the Muslim World, now occupies a landmark new building in Marston Road. It was inaugurated by the Centre's patron, the Prince of Wales, in 2017. This unique building blends classical Islamic design features with the traditional British style of many of Oxford's ancient colleges, forming an exciting new addition to Oxford's renowned skyline. It includes an extensive library, auditorium and seminar rooms, dining hall, and accommodation for up to 40 students as well as offices for Centre fellows. The stone buildings are surrounded by paved courtyards and gardens.

The Centre was established in 1985 to encourage the scholarly study of Islam and the Islamic World and to provide a meeting place for the Western and Islamic Worlds of learning and encourage multi-disciplinary and cross-disciplinary study.

The Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies





The Prince of Wales Garden at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies

PRESERVING MIDDLE EASTERN HERITAGE

Throughout the Middle East, Oxford researchers work with local and national organisations to document, preserve and study the region's unrivalled archaeological heritage. Experts from the School of Archaeology contribute to substantial projects ranging from maritime excavations of shipwrecks and sunken cities around Alexandria, Egypt, with the L'Institut Européen d'Archéologie Sous-Marine and the Egyptian Ministry of Antiquities, to collaborative scientific work with the Institut National des Sciences de l'Archéologie et du Patrimoine, Rabat on excavations at the prehistoric Taforalt Cave in Morocco. They are also engaged in survey and excavation work with the Institut National du Patrimoine in Tunisia on the ancient shorelines of the Chotts Megalake, while the Tunisian–British Utica Project investigates the development of the ancient city of Utica (in present-day Tunisia) during the Roman period.

Oxford plays a leading role in preserving threatened archaeological sites in the region. The University, with a grant from the Arcadia Fund, was a founding member

of the Endangered Archaeology in the Middle East and North Africa (EAMENA) project, which aims to preserve and document at-risk archaeological sites. Working with national antiquities departments from countries throughout the Middle East and North Africa, the EAMENA project has created nearly 300,000 records in its online database. The project uses satellite imagery, aerial reconnaissance, aerial photographic archives and published reports to document archaeological heritage, much of which is currently threatened. It is helping to develop digital National Heritage Inventories for Jordan, Palestine and Yemen, as well as carrying out fieldwork in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman and Saudi Arabia.

The University has also been involved in the preservation of more modern heritage buildings. Oxford's School of Geography, together with the World Monuments Fund Britain and Jordan's Petra National Trust were members of a British Council project that provided stonemasonry skills to Jordanian and Syrian students so they could repair conflict-related damage.

ADDRESSING REGIONAL CHALLENGES

The contemporary Middle East is a region of huge diversity, with rich and poor countries, mineral wealth and water shortages, and often-turbulent politics. Oxford researchers work with partners across the region to better understand and address the complex social and political challenges the Middle East faces. Research carried out with local partners improves international understanding of the region and helps inform local policymaking.

Aiding development

The Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI), part of the Oxford Department of International Development, has collaborated on work in the Middle East, both with national governments and with regional bodies, to help improve the measurement and reduction of multidimensional poverty. One highlight of this work was the development of an Arab Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) with the UN's Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN-ESCWA) in a report that was approved by the League of Arab States in 2017. OPHI has also partnered with the Saudi Arabia-

based Islamic Development Bank to provide capacity building for statisticians and researchers from the region. OPHI continues to have active engagement with UN-ESCWA and with several countries in the region.

Researchers in Oxford's School of Geography and the Environment help to develop shared management strategies for transboundary river systems in the region. The Nile is a major focus of their research, where they have devised new ways to manage the risks of droughts, working in partnership with Cairo University, Ain Shams University, and Egypt's Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation through the Water Resources Research Institute within the National Water Research Center and the Nile Water Sector. Other primary collaborators include the Nile Basin Initiative and various Nile research institutions in both Sudan and Ethiopia. The Oxford Martin Programme on Transboundary Resource Management is also supporting research on energy and water in Israel, Palestine and Jordan, exploring how cooperative management of these resources can help to build mutual understanding.

The Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford





The Faculty of Law, Oxford

Price Law Moot Competition

The Faculty of Law’s prestigious Monroe E. Price Media Law Moot Court Competition holds rounds in the Middle East every year. The Middle East regional rounds are delivered in partnership with Egypt’s Ain Shams University. In 2019 they were hosted in partnership with the British University in Egypt; in 2020, the rounds were due to be hosted by the Islamic University of Lebanon, unfortunately the rounds had to be cancelled due to security concerns, however, a pre-Moot was held. Eight teams qualified, on the basis of written Memorials, to participate in the final round in Oxford.

Supporting refugees

Oxford’s Refugee Studies Centre (RSC) leads the Architectures of Displacement project, which has been exploring the strategies used by governments and humanitarian aid organisations in sheltering large numbers of forced migrants since 2015, focusing on the role of architecture and design in this process and considering their impact on the lives of refugees. The project brings together experts in forced displacement, archaeology, anthropology and architecture to study refugee shelter across six countries. It is active at sites in Jordan and Lebanon as well as in four European countries. Oxford’s Pitt Rivers Museum has also been a partner in the project.

The RSC works with displaced Syrians in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey. It also collaborates with New York University Abu Dhabi (NYUAD) in hosting ongoing workshops on displaced Syrians, bringing researchers and practitioners together to examine and critique contemporary humanitarian approaches to them. Collaboration between the RSC and NYUAD also encompasses research with the peri-urban pastoral groups inhabiting the frontier zones between the UAE and Oman.



STUDENT PROFILE:

Nur Arafah, Palestine

Course: DPhil in International Development; Rhodes Scholar

The Oxford Experience: Life in

Oxford is very busy: besides carrying out my own research, I teach a course on the political economy of the developing world and I continue to write op-eds and facilitate roundtable events for Al-Shabaka: the Palestinian Policy Network, which I worked with before starting my doctoral studies. When I have free time, I like walking in Oxford’s parks and going to concerts.

Aspirations: After I finish my DPhil, I am planning to write a book on business elite formation in the West Bank, based on my doctoral research.



Former Oxford Geography researcher Dr Laila Al Harthy, now senior botanist at the Oman Botanic Gardens, sampling remote high altitude desert plant communities in the Al Hajar Mountains with the logistical support of the Royal Air Force of Oman

SCIENTIFIC COLLABORATION

Oxford scientists work with partners throughout the Middle East. Our collaborations span from fundamental science to cutting-edge technology, with particular attention paid to geology, wildlife and resources. Working with Middle Eastern partners has helped Oxford learn from experts in the region and apply the University's scientific expertise in the Middle East's unique environment.

Geological evolution of the Oman–UAE mountains

Geologists from Oxford's Department of Earth Sciences have worked with scientists from both Oman and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for many years. There is a particularly close relationship with the Geological Society of Oman, with whom Oxford is working to establish a series of GeoParks, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and UNESCO World Heritage sites in the country, with the support of Petroleum Development Oman. The Department of Earth Sciences also collaborates with partners in the UAE including Khalifa University and Abu Dhabi's Petroleum Institute on various aspects of petroleum geology, including onshore geology, mapping, structure, tectonics and both onshore and offshore seismic interpretation, linked to well data, gravity, magnetics and receiver function studies.

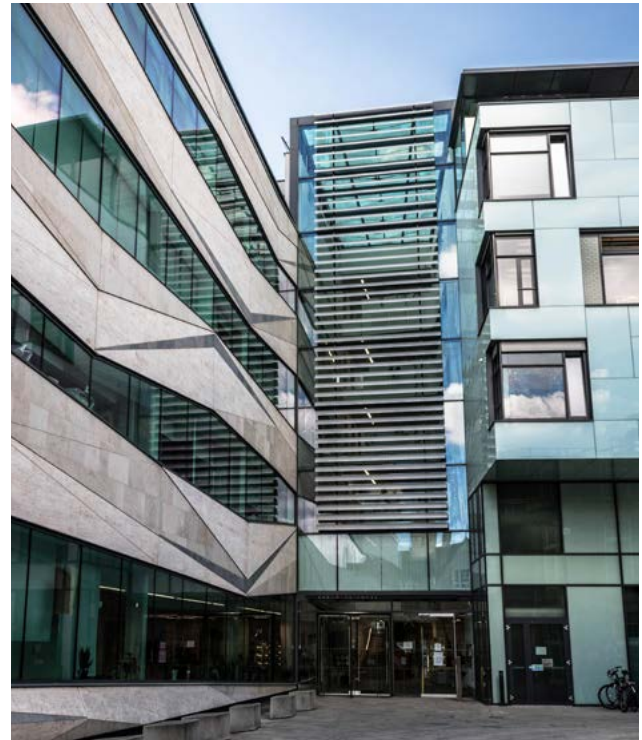
Between 2012 and 2018 Oxford earth scientists worked with multiple Asian partners through the Earthquakes without Frontiers (EwF) project. Although the formal project has now concluded, project members continue to work together. Drawing together British universities with regional collaborators, EwF aims to increase resilience to earthquakes across the Alpine–Himalayan region (from Iran to China). The Geological Survey of Iran has been particularly active within the project, issuing a statement on the mitigation of earthquake risk and contributing scientific advice to neighbouring countries.

Working for a sustainable future

The Department of Engineering Science's Sustainable Water Engineering Group leads a collaborative research project into low-energy desalination, sponsored by the University of Bahrain. This research project has developed over the past four years, growing out of collaborative research workshops in the Gulf region.

Oxford engineers were also members of an intelligent transport research project led by Qatar's Hamid Bin Khalifa University, which worked to develop systems through which vehicles can communicate.

Dubai airline Emirates is a member of the Professionalising Data Science network, run by Oxford's Mathematical Institute. The airline joined the network, which provides data science expertise to a range of large businesses, after funding the Emirates Data Science Lab in the Institute for three years.



Department of Earth Sciences, Oxford

Petrochemical research promises a clean energy future

The KACST–Oxford Petrochemical Research Centre (KOPRC) is a joint research centre, created by the Department of Chemistry and the King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology (KACST) – the Saudi Arabian National Research Centre. The founding vision in 2010 was to drive forward cutting-edge research and development in catalysis and clean processes in petrochemical research and technologies.

The Centre is working in a number of areas vital to the world's future petrochemical use, such as the development of materials that will allow the clean production of high-value chemicals with no or low carbon emission, "green hydrogen" production and energy storage, and new CO₂ capture and activation processes. These advances are opening the world to a transition from the present carbon-intensive, to a carbon-neutral or even carbon-negative era.

Another founding principle of KOPRC was the education and training-by-research of young people from Saudi Arabia, the developing world and the UK.

KOPRC is the only centre designated a "Centre of Excellence in Petrochemical Research" by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia outside the Middle East.



STUDENT PROFILE:

Mira Mousa, Iraq

Course:
DPhil in Women's and Reproductive Health

The Oxford Experience:
Oxford has provided me with an

opportunity to collaborate and work alongside a well-integrated network of brilliant and dedicated colleagues in a world-leading research environment – an inspirational and exhilarating experience that continues to grow my intellectual curiosity. I am thankful for its cultural diversity, emphasis on welfare, welcoming college community, outstanding libraries, and breathtaking historic buildings.

Aspirations: I want to continue my research to improve the understanding of gynecological health and diseases in the Middle East.

FIRST STUDY OF MIDDLE EASTERN WOMEN'S HEALTH

The MAR'A Project, housed in the Nuffield Department of Women's and Reproductive Health, is the first systematic effort to collect women's health data in the Middle East. The study is gathering data on gynaecological diseases, in the context of regional environmental and genetic factors, to improve diagnosis and treatment. It has been suggested that Middle Eastern women suffer a high incidence of such diseases, though data is limited.

Ultimately, it is hoped that the Project will promote evidence-based medicine and provide data for regional policymakers that might improve public awareness, early detection practices and lifestyles. Advisors to the project include medical scientists from UAE University and Khalifa University.

PARTNERSHIP WITH ISRAELI INSTITUTIONS ADVANCES MEDICAL SCIENCE

Oxford has a long-standing relationship with life/medical science institutions in Israel, and has played a leading role in deepening joint research between Israel and the UK.

Professor Raymond Dwek, director of Oxford's Glycobiology Institute, has been a major force in furthering UK-Israel scientific collaboration for over two decades. In 2013 he was awarded the CBE (Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire) for his contributions to UK-Israel academic collaboration. He was special advisor on biotechnology to the president of Ben Gurion University of the Negev from 1997-2019 and played an instrumental role in helping to establish the National Institute for Biotechnology in the Negev.

Professor Dwek was also a founding co-chair of the UK-Israel Sciences Council, which was set up in 2010 to help initiate UK-Israel research collaborations and support the grant-awarding Britain-Israel Research and Academic Exchange Partnership (BIRAX), a £10 million initiative of the British Council and British Embassy in Israel in collaboration with the Pears Foundation and the United Jewish Israel Appeal. BIRAX funds cutting-edge research using stem cell and regenerative medicine therapies to tackle some of the world's most challenging conditions and diseases including cardiovascular and liver disease, diabetes and Parkinson's.

Joint research between medical scientists at Oxford and Israeli partners that has been supported by BIRAX includes projects with Israel's Weizmann Institute of Science to research stem cells and the immune system, and investigate how to activate resident heart cells to restore damaged muscle following a heart attack.



Professor Raymond Dwek receiving his CBE from the Princess Royal, in 2013



View of the Ancient Near East gallery in the Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford

OXFORD MUSEUMS COLLABORATE WITH ARAB INSTITUTIONS TO PROMOTE MIDDLE EASTERN CULTURE

Generous donations from HRH Prince Sultan Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud of Saudi Arabia and Yousef Jameel in the last ten years have helped to create a new home for the extensive Islamic art collection at the **Ashmolean Museum**. The Sultan Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud Islamic Middle East gallery displays artefacts made over a period of more than 1,000 years in an area spanning from North Africa to Afghanistan. These gifts have also established an online resource for the museum's Eastern Art Department's collections and a study centre for the academic and public study of these collections, making the Ashmolean's ancient and modern treasures accessible within and beyond the museum and helping to promote a deeper understanding of Islamic art and culture.

As a whole, the Ashmolean's Islamic collections are the third most important in the UK after the national collections in London (The British Museum and V&A), with strong holdings from Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Iran and Saudi Arabia in media such as ceramics, glass, metalwork and calligraphy, as well as architectural wood and tilework. The Islamic collection also holds a number of world-renowned archives from pioneering Islamic specialists, including the Creswell Archive of Islamic Architecture, the May Beattie Archive of Islamic Carpets and several archaeological archives. The Ashmolean's collections from ancient Egypt and Sudan are among the most extensive in Britain, with approximately 50,000 objects representing every period of human occupation in the Nile Valley from prehistory to the seventh century AD. The major holdings derive from

British excavations in Egypt conducted from the 1880s until the late 1930s. Oxford University excavations in southern Egypt and Sudan from 1910 onward added a representative collection of Nubian material. The Museum also houses over 8,000 ostraca covering all scripts and languages that have been used in Egypt.

The Ashmolean's Ancient Near East collections range in date from the earliest farming communities of the tenth millennium BC to the spread of Islam in the seventh century AD, and include significant groups of excavated material from sites such as Jericho, Jerusalem, Abu Hurerya, Kish, Nimrud, Alalakh and Al Mina. The Museum holds the second-largest collection of cuneiform tablets in the UK, including examples of some of the world's earliest writing.

The History of Science Museum cares for the world's finest collection of astronomical instruments from the Islamic World, from Toledo to Lahore, with its earliest astrolabe (a hugely complex type of instrument unsurpassed in sophistication until the invention of the computer in the 20th century) dating from the ninth century. The collection includes unique examples of this very rich tradition, such as the only complete spherical, and the only surviving geared astrolabe. The Museum works closely with its partners and communities in the UK and internationally to create a platform for display and debate which illuminates ideas crossing faiths, cultures and time to explore the questions that unite humanity.

Thanks to philanthropic support, the Museum has recently appointed its first dedicated curator for the collection from the Islamic World.

The University's **Pitt Rivers Museum** has worked closely with Middle East partners, particularly in the UAE, to make its vast collection of Sir Wilfred Thesiger's photographs of the region more available to audiences through exhibitions, for instance at Jahili Fort, Al Ain, as well as online via the Museum's website.

The Museum's collaborations include projects with the Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture and Heritage, Abu Dhabi Tourism and Culture Authority, UAE National Archives, and National Museum of Oman, among others.

The Thesiger collection is one of the highlights of the University of Oxford's Middle Eastern holdings, comprising 38,000 negatives and 71 albums relating to his famous travels across the Rub' Al Khali (Empty Quarter) of the Arabian Peninsula in the 1940s, as well as long sojourns among the Marsh Arabs of Iraq in the 1950s, travels in Kurdish Iraq, and many other areas. The Museum has also recently acquired a major photographic collection from Saudi Arabia by the photographer Ilo Battigelli who worked in the oil industry there in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

The History of Science Museum and the **Pitt Rivers Museum** jointly deliver the Multaka–Oxford project, in collaboration with people who are forced migrants and local support organisations. The project provides a structured volunteering programme based around the museums' collections with the aim of bringing people together and creating opportunities for inter-cultural dialogue. Multaka staff and volunteers are currently working together with two collections: the Islamic scientific instruments at the History of Science Museum and a recent donation of

Middle Eastern and North African textiles from Jenny Balfour Paul to the Pitt Rivers Museum. Museum staff and volunteers are researching, learning and discovering other perspectives about these collections. This wealth of knowledge and understanding is being added to the museums' databases and is being shared with the wider community through multi-lingual events, tours, blogs and displays.

Multaka in Arabic translates in English to 'meeting point'. The award-winning project is inspired by the Berlin museums' 'Multaka: Museums as a meeting point' initiative.

One of Europe's oldest libraries, the **Bodleian Libraries** has been acquiring Middle Eastern manuscripts since its inception – founder Sir Thomas Bodley was keen to encourage the acquisition of Arabic and Islamic writings.

Today the Bodleian Libraries has one of the most important collections of Islamic manuscripts in Europe, containing more than 5,000 documents. It includes many rare Arabic, Persian and Turkish items including literary classics, philosophical tracts, medical texts and mathematics books.

In 2002 the Bodleian Libraries acquired an illustrated manuscript of a hitherto-unknown Arabic cosmographical treatise, known as the *Book of Curiosities*. The book, which contains an early world map, is regarded as a key text for the history of science, especially astronomy and cartography.

The Bodleian also has one of Europe's largest collections of historic Hebrew books and manuscripts, including 2,000 manuscripts and thousands of early printed Hebrew books. The collection includes the famous *Kennicott Bible*, one of the most important examples of medieval illuminated Hebrew Bibles.

Multaka volunteer Waed Alawad describes the workings of an astrolabe at the History of Science Museum





Students and staff from the Middle East

Close to 250 students from the Middle East currently study at Oxford. Egypt, Iran, Israel and Saudi Arabia are the countries that send most students from the region to Oxford. Our Middle Eastern students study at all levels and across the University's medicine, science, humanities and social science divisions; a majority are postgraduates.

Oxford also employs more than 100 staff from the region, the majority in academic and research-related roles.

Oxford alumni help shape the region

There are close to 2,000 Oxford alumni based in Middle Eastern countries and registered with the University. Some of our best-known graduates include:

- His Majesty Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein of Jordan and His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq Al Said of Oman.
- Government leaders such as Prince Faisal bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, governor of Saudi Arabia's Madinah Province.
- Academics and civil society leaders, such as Rashid Khalidi, the Palestinian-born Edward Said Professor of Arab Studies at Columbia University; Farah Al-Daghistani, executive director of the Jordan Hashemite Fund for Human Development; and Dame Minouche Shafik, director of the London School of Economics.

Scholarship opportunities

Graduate students from the Middle East who are starting new graduate courses at Oxford can receive funding from a wide range of scholarships. Scholarship opportunities at Oxford include programmes open to applicants from all countries such as the Clarendon Fund, which makes over 130 new awards each year, and the Ertegun Graduate Scholarships in the Humanities, which have a history of recruiting scholars from the region. The University also provides scholarships for specific courses and regions such as the Oxford-Weidenfeld and Hoffmann Scholarships and Leadership Programme, which include most Middle Eastern countries.

Scholarships focused on particular countries in the Middle East include the Saïd Foundation Oxford Scholarships covering Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria; the Oxford-Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Graduate Scholarships focused on the United Arab Emirates; and the Oxford-Reuben Foundation Graduate Scholarships focused on Israel.

The Oxford-Islamic Development Bank scholarships are available to scholars ordinarily resident in the Bank's member countries, who hold an offer to study a master's or DPhil in a social science subject relevant to the Sustainable Development Goals.

The renowned Rhodes Scholarship now warmly welcomes students from Israel, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. The Rhodes Trust hopes to make further Scholarships available in the region in the future.

Gulf ministers and executives study via Saïd Business School

The University of Oxford has a proud history of developing global leaders in government and the public and private sectors. Oxford's Saïd Business School has an excellent reputation of working with governments and regional organisations in the Gulf, including the Diwan of the Royal Court of Oman, to provide executive education delivered both in the region and at Oxford.

The Saïd Business School is also one of 30 members of the Global Network for Advanced Management (GNAM), which also includes the Technion Israel Institute of Technology.

Faculty posts funded by Middle East donors

Oxford has been fortunate to benefit from the generosity of a number of Middle East donors who have funded key faculty posts at the University.

Gifts from the Qatar Foundation created the IM Pei Professor of Islamic Art and Architecture and the His Highness Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani Chair in Contemporary Islamic Studies.

In 2016, Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain of Kuwait provided a gift that fully endowed the historic Laudian Chair in Arabic, one of Oxford's oldest professorial chairs, which has been renamed the Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain Laudian Chair in Arabic in his honour.

Other important endowed posts include:

- The Khalid bin Abdullah Al Saud Professor of the Contemporary Arab World
- The King Mohamed VI Fellowship in Moroccan and Mediterranean Studies
- The Shaikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahayan Lectureship in Islamic Studies





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