



ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS FOR MSc IN CONSERVATION FOR ARCHAEOLOGY AND MUSEUMS

KNOWLEDGE OF CHEMISTRY

Conservators need some background in chemistry in order to understand and predict the behaviour of the materials they are working with, and this is why chemistry is a prerequisite for admission to many conservation-training programmes around the world.

It is not necessary for you to have a qualification in chemistry in order to be admitted to the MA Principles of Conservation programme, however, it *is* a prerequisite for the MSc Conservation for Archaeology and Museums programme.

If you are planning to proceed from the MA to the MSc programme, you are advised to ensure that you have a suitable chemistry qualification prior to your application to the MA programme.

In the case of applicants with British qualifications, a chemistry qualification equivalent to AS-level is an entry requirement for the MSc programme. This is an examination that is taken at the end of the penultimate year in high school, at the age 17.

In the case of overseas applicants, we accept alternative qualifications for the entry requirement for the MSc programme. This might be in the form of comparable examinations taken at High school (such as an Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) course in chemistry), or it might be in the form of courses taken at university (such as relevant chemistry modules at college level, even if you did not major in a science).

It is possible to study chemistry whilst taking the MA programme, but it is preferable that you address this prior to your application, as there is no suitable UCL chemistry programme that you would be able to take during the MA year.

It is possible to complete an AS- level Chemistry course as a part time student at a Further Education College in London (for example, South Thames College <http://www.south-thames.ac.uk> & Ealing Hammersmith and West London College <http://www.wlc.ac.uk>).

A number of past students, whether from the UK or from overseas, have taken a distant learning programme called *Chemistry for Conservators*, (www.academicprojects.co.uk.) which does not assume any prior knowledge of chemistry. The programme does not teach chemistry to the same depth as AS-level, and therefore cannot be used on its own to fulfil the entry requirements of the MSc programme, however it has the advantage that it is directly related to conservation chemistry. The course is useful for students who meet the entry requirements described above, but need to refresh their knowledge of chemistry prior to entry into the MSc programme.

We are sometimes asked for a list of topics that need to be covered in a chemistry course that will meet our requirements. This is not usually a helpful approach, since any one topic can be covered at a very elementary level or at a very advanced level. Similarly, we are often asked, "Is my chemistry good enough?" If that is your position, try asking yourself the following questions:

What is the difference between an atom and a molecule?

What holds molecules together?

What is meant by pH, and what is its significance?

What is a 'polar' molecule?

What is the difference between a monomer and a polymer?

Which is in the higher oxidation state – Fe(II) or Fe(III)?

What is an electrochemical cell?

What would you expect to happen if you tried to clean a marble object with a chelating agent?

If you can answer all these questions without any hesitation, it is likely that your chemistry is already good enough. If you have no idea what the questions even mean, then you need to find a chemistry course that starts from square one. You might also like to look at the three books that form the *Science for Conservators* series. Published first by the Crafts Council, then by the Museums and Galleries Commission, and now by Routledge, they cover An Introduction to Materials (Book 1), Cleaning (Book 2) and Adhesives and Consolidants (Book 3). They do not cover all the chemistry you will need to know, but they are a good starting point.

They are also useful if you are feeling a bit rusty and want to give your chemistry a brush-up.

Your knowledge of chemistry will be assessed during your interview for the MSc programme and will be used as a criterion for selecting applicants for places on the programme.

If you have any questions about the suitability of your chemistry qualification for entry into the MSc Conservation for Archaeology and Museums programme, please contact the programme coordinator.