



INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY

MA in Archaeology

Degree Handbook 2023-24

Co-ordinator:

Prof. Stephen Shennan
s.shennan@ucl.ac.uk

Institute of Archaeology
Office 407, tel. 0207 679 4739

Office hours, in person or via Teams: Wednesdays 1.0-3.0 pm in term time and other times by arrangement



INTRODUCTION

This is the Handbook for the MA degree programme in Archaeology. It outlines the aims and objectives, structure and content of the degree. It will be made available on the MA Archaeology Moodle (<https://moodle.ucl.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=39111>)

This Handbook should be used alongside the general Institute of Archaeology Student Handbook: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology/current-students/iaa-student-handbook>

If you have queries about the organisation, objectives, structure, content or assessment of the degree, you should consult the Degree Co-ordinator.

AIMS AND OUTCOMES OF THE DEGREE

Aims

- To provide a wide-ranging and challenging introduction to theoretical issues involved in modern archaeology as a comparative, anthropologically-informed and socially-situated discipline.
- To encourage critically aware perspectives on archaeological practice and research processes.
- To provide an in-depth understanding of approaches to the collection, analysis and interpretation of archaeological data.
- To support detailed study at the forefront of knowledge in a wide range of areas within archaeology.
- To provide a sufficiently detailed understanding of archaeological data to serve as a basis for independent research.
- To foster the ability to develop original research questions and to explore them effectively through research.
- To provide training relevant to a professional career in archaeology.
- To provide a strong background for continuing on to a research degree in archaeology.

These aims are pursued through a degree with two core courses designed to provide a solid understanding of the recent history, theories and methods of archaeology, and a wide range of potential options from which you can define an individual pathway through the programme, tailored to your specific interests and personal educational objectives. All students undertake a supervised research project resulting in a 15,000 word dissertation, which enables them to develop specific practical, analytical and interpretative skills as well as broader research skills.

Outcomes

Upon successful completion of the MA in Archaeology, you will, among other things, have:

- gained a detailed understanding of recent theoretical perspectives in the field;
- developed your critical faculties in discussion, debate, and evaluation of alternative perspectives on and interpretations of archaeological data;
- acquired a range of subject-specific skills, relevant to your further development as practising archaeologists;

- developed a range of research-oriented skills; and
- carried through a substantial programme of independent research embodied in a dissertation that demonstrates theoretical understanding and practical competence in archaeological analysis and interpretation.

DEGREE STRUCTURE

The programme of study for this degree is intended to help you meet the objectives outlined above, and also to provide an opportunity for you to achieve any additional personal academic objectives. It comprises:

- two compulsory core modules (15 credits each, 30 credits in total);
- options (60 credits in total) comprising modules of either 15 credits or 30 credits; and
- a dissertation on a research topic within the broad field of Archaeology (90 credits).

Each module addresses a specific subject and has its own Co-ordinator.

Core Modules

ARCL0133 Themes, Thought and Theory in World Archaeology: Foundations.

ARCL0134 Themes, Thought and Theory in World Archaeology: Current Topics.

These core modules are designed to provide an intensive graduate-level introduction to archaeological theory, research questions and reasoning within a seminar framework based on set readings and in some cases online lectures that you are required to listen to in advance of the seminar. The Term 1 module, *Foundations*, introduces you to the modern history of archaeological ideas and to several broad interpretive frameworks that continue to guide the generation of archaeological knowledge. The Term 2 module, *Current Topics*, examines current research organised around broad themes, highlighting a range of approaches to each. Details of each module are given in the relevant module handbooks.

Option Modules

You must take 60 credits of options, made up of 15-credit or 30-credit modules. Normally, you select options from those available within (and particularly relevant to) your specific degree, but given the intentionally broad nature of this degree, you may select options from those available in other Masters' degrees taught in the Institute of Archaeology, after discussion with and subject to the agreement of the Degree Co-ordinator. More exceptionally, it is possible to take up to 30 credits provided by another Department at UCL, or one of the other Colleges of the University of London – you should discuss this with your Degree Co-ordinator.

Subject to space and the agreement of the Module Co-ordinators involved, you are welcome to attend modules in addition to those for which you are formally registered and examined.

Dissertation

The dissertation of up to 15,000 words is a report on research. There are few restrictions but the topic

chosen must be approved by the Degree Coordinator as relevant to the general area covered by this degree. Soon after arrival, you should discuss your area of research interests with your Degree Co-ordinator, who will help you to focus your ideas for your dissertation, or refer you to another member of staff who will be able to provide more specific advice, and will probably become your Dissertation Supervisor. The Supervisor will help you define your dissertation topic and provide guidance through the main stages of the work. The dissertation provides a further opportunity to explore and achieve your own academic objectives. It might be used to apply newly learned approaches to an archaeological problem that has long been of interest, or to gain greater experience with particular methods of data analysis. If you are studying part-time while working in the field or a museum, you might choose to analyse a data set derived from your own work, or to assess the potential of particular theoretical or methodological approaches for your work. You can treat the dissertation as a one-off research project, as a pilot study for a Ph.D. project, or use it to showcase your skills for potential employers.

The dissertation submission deadline is **Monday 2 September 2024**.

Guidelines for researching, writing and producing the dissertation are included in the Institute of Archaeology Study Skills Guide:

<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology/current-students/iaa-study-skills-guide/dissertations>

Advice on the preparation of the dissertation will be provided through training sessions during the year.

TEACHING SCHEDULE

Taught modules take place in the first two terms. You are expected to use the remaining months of your degree to research and write your dissertation.

TEACHING METHODS

Most modules taken by MA Archaeology students are based on a two-hour weekly seminar through the first two terms (30 credit) or just one term (15 credit). Seminars are run differently by individual Module Co-ordinators, and some modules will also include asynchronous online lectures to be viewed in advance of the seminar, but all have weekly assigned readings, which you will be expected to have read, to be able fully to follow and actively to contribute to the discussion. Some modules may require you to make a seminar presentation; if so, this will be indicated in the module handbook and explained in the first session of the module. Some will also have associated practicals, laboratory sessions, or field trips.

PREREQUISITES

Modules for the MA in Archaeology do not normally have prerequisites; you will have been accepted to the degree on the understanding that you have sufficient background in archaeology or a cognate field, either through your previous degree or through relevant experience, to be able to follow the degree and modules for which you have been accepted. If, however, you wish to change your degree, or the modules in which you indicated an interest in enrolling in your application, you should discuss this with the relevant Degree and Module Co-ordinators as soon as possible, to ensure that you have the necessary background to benefit from the course.

For some modules, depending on your previous background, it may be recommended that you also attend (but will not be assessed for) a parallel undergraduate module, to ensure that you have the background to get the most out of the Masters level seminars.

COURSEWORK

All information about methods of assessment, plagiarism, word length, late submission penalties etc. may be found in the Institute of Archaeology Student Handbook:

<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology/current-students/ioa-student-handbook/13-information-assessment>

[and](#)

<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology/current-students/ioa-study-skills-guide/assessment-and-feedback-ioa>

Practice essay

Much of the assessment of coursework for the MA Archaeology is based on writing essays. In order that you have the opportunity to ensure that you are familiar with what is expected of an essay at the Institute (including conventions for the citation of sources and submission of essays via Moodle to the Turnitin program) you are required to submit a practice essay.

The essay will be marked in the normal way and will be returned to you with comments and any suggestions for improvement. An indication of the likely mark will be given for guidance, but the mark will *not* be included in the assessment of your year's work. We hope that many of you will find the writing of a practice essay a helpful means of ensuring that you are producing the sort of work expected before submitting an essay that will contribute to your final marks.

Essay task: *Write a review of an archaeology book or article that you have recently read. The review should include a summary of the book/article and an analysis of its strengths and weaknesses that explains/justifies your assessment.*

The Practice Essay should be a maximum 1000 words in length.

You will find useful advice on writing a review at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology/current-students/ioa-study-skills-guide/writing-review>

You should not use any writing improvement software when doing this essay. The whole point of it is to get an idea of whether you need any assistance in English academic writing.

SUBMISSION PROCEDURES

The practice essay must be submitted to Turnitin via the MA Archaeology 23-24 Moodle site:

<https://moodle.ucl.ac.uk/mod/turnitintooltwo/view.php?id=5606185>.

This link takes you directly to the Turnitin submission folder but you can also find it under the Assessment tab of the MA Archaeology 23/24 Moodle:

(<https://moodle.ucl.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=39111§ion=0>).

This must be done by midnight on the day of the deadline, **Friday 13 October 2023**.

DISSERTATION PRESENTATION (ORAL EXAMINATION)

All Master's students are required to attend an oral examination as part of their Dissertation assessment and takes the form of a presentation of the dissertation plans. This will normally be held in late May or early June. The oral examination will be attended by the Degree Co-ordinator and another member of staff, often the Dissertation Supervisor, as well as fellow students, and will last for approximately 25 minutes, 15 minutes for the presentation and 10 minutes for questions. No marks are awarded for the oral examination; the assessment is satisfactory or unsatisfactory.