# Subject benchmark statement

# Archaeology

Draft for consultation

June 2014

# Contents

# How can I use this document?

This document is a subject benchmark statement for archaeology, that defines what can be expected of a graduate in the subject, in terms of what they might know, do and understand at the end of their studies.

You may want to read this document if you are:

- involved in the design, delivery and review of programmes of study in archaeology or related subjects
- a prospective student thinking about studying archaeology, or a current student of the subject, to find out what may be involved
- an employer, to find out about the knowledge and skills generally expected of a graduate in archaeology.

Explanations of unfamiliar terms used in this subject benchmark statement can be found in QAA's glossary.[1] QAA has also published a general guide to quality assurance in higher education.[2]

[1] The QAA glossary is available at: www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/glossary.
[2] A general guide to quality assurance can be found at: www.qaa.ac.uk/AssuringStandardsAndQuality/what-is-quality.

# About subject benchmark statements

Subject benchmark statements form part of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code) which sets out the Expectations that all providers of UK higher education reviewed by QAA are required to meet.[3] They are a component of *Part A: Setting and maintaining academic standards*, which includes the Expectation that higher education providers 'consider and take account of relevant subject benchmark statements' in order to secure threshold academic standards.[4]

Subject benchmark statements describe the nature of study and the academic standards expected of graduates in specific subject areas, and in respect of particular qualifications. They provide a picture of what graduates in a particular subject might reasonably be expected to know, do and understand at the end of their programme of study.

Subject benchmark statements are used as reference points in the design, delivery and review of academic programmes. They provide general guidance for articulating the learning outcomes associated with the programme but are not intended to represent a national curriculum in a subject or to prescribe set approaches to teaching, learning or assessment. Instead, they allow for flexibility and innovation in programme design within a framework agreed by the subject community. Further guidance about programme design, development and approval, learning and teaching, assessment of students, and programme monitoring and review is available in *Part B: Assuring and enhancing academic quality* of the Quality Code in the following Chapters:[5]

- *Chapter B1: Programme design, development and approval*
- *Chapter B3: Learning and teaching*
- *Chapter B6: Assessment of students and the recognition of prior learning*
- *Chapter B8: Programme monitoring and review.*

For some subject areas, higher education providers may need to consider other reference points in addition to the subject benchmark statement in designing, delivering and reviewing programmes. These may include requirements set out by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies, national occupational standards and industry or employer expectations. In such cases, the subject benchmark statement may provide additional guidance around academic standards not covered by these requirements.[6] The relationship between academic and professional or regulatory requirements is made clear within individual statements, but it is the responsibility of individual higher education providers to decide how they use this information. The responsibility for academic standards remains with the higher education provider who awards the degree.

Subject benchmark statements are written and maintained by subject specialists drawn from and acting on behalf of the subject community. The process is facilitated by QAA. In order to ensure the continuing currency of subject benchmark statements, QAA initiates regular reviews of their content, five years after first publication, and every seven years subsequently.

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[3] www.qaa.ac.uk/qualitycode. The Quality Code aligns with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*, available at: www.enqa.eu/pubs_esg.lasso.
[4] www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Quality-Code-Part-A.aspx
[5] Individual Chapters are available at: www.qaa.ac.uk/AssuringStandardsAndQuality/quality-code/Pages/Quality-Code-Part-B.aspx.
[6] See further *Part A: Setting and maintaining academic standards*, available at: www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Quality-Code-Part-A.aspx.

## Relationship to legislation

Higher education providers are responsible for meeting the requirements of legislation and any other regulatory requirements placed upon them, for example by funding bodies. The Quality Code does not interpret legislation nor does it incorporate statutory or regulatory requirements. Sources of information about other requirements and examples of guidance and good practice are signposted within the subject benchmark statement where appropriate. Higher education providers are responsible for how they use these resources.[7]

## Equality and diversity

The Quality Code embeds consideration of equality and diversity matters throughout. Promoting equality involves treating everyone with equal dignity and worth, while also raising aspirations and supporting achievement for people with diverse requirements, entitlements and backgrounds. An inclusive environment for learning anticipates the varied requirements of learners, and aims to ensure that all students have equal access to educational opportunities. Higher education providers, staff and students all have a role in, and responsibility for, promoting equality.

Equality of opportunity involves enabling access for people who have differing individual requirements as well as eliminating arbitrary and unnecessary barriers to learning. In addition, disabled students and non-disabled students are offered learning opportunities that are equally accessible to them, by means of inclusive design wherever possible and by means of reasonable individual adjustments wherever necessary.

[7] See further the *UK Quality Code for Higher Education: General Introduction*, available at: www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Quality-Code-introduction.aspx.

# About this subject benchmark statement

This subject benchmark statement refers to bachelor's degrees with honours in archaeology.

This version of the statement forms its third edition, following initial publication in 2000 and review and revision in 2007.[8]

## Note on alignment with higher education sector coding systems

Programmes of study which use this subject benchmark statement as a reference point are generally classified under the following codes in the Joint Academic Coding System (JACS): F400, F420, F490, V400, V410, V420, V430, V440, V460, V470, V471, V472, V490.[9]

## Summary of changes from the previous subject benchmark statement (2007)

The draft statement reflects very limited changes compared with the version published in 2007. The changes reflect the development of the subject and its interrelationship with other subjects and their development. Factual details have been updated, notably in the professional and European contexts. The benchmark standards in section 6 include only minor changes of wording.

## Foreword

The 2013-14 review of this subject benchmark statement was undertaken by a group of subject specialists drawn from and acting on behalf of the subject community and overseen by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). The benchmarking group included representatives of the academic community together with the invaluable contribution of those drawn from professional bodies, employers and educational charities. Some representatives are involved in the European Association of Archaeologists Committee on Teaching and Training of Archaeologists. We commend the principle of seeking the view of a student on the subject benchmark.

The benchmarking group has sought to capture the unique and distinctive nature of archaeology, highlighting more recent contributions drawn from the humanities and sciences, qualitative and quantitative approaches, as well as reinforcing the appropriate field and laboratory skills needed to address fundamental enquiries into the development of human societies. The knowledge and transferable skills developed in archaeology are also valuable preparation for many other careers.

There have also been some notable changes in teaching and learning initiatives since 2006. Digital resources generally continue to grow year on year, especially the availability of electronic journals, 'grey' literature and online databases, for example the Archaeology Data Service and the Portable Antiquities Scheme. Other changes include greater opportunities for students to study abroad, the variety of placements now on offer, and the development of field schools. Current students in full or part-time study may also now join the Institute for Archaeologists at a non-accredited grade; a signal of the improved integration between

[8] Further information is available in the *Recognition scheme for subject benchmark statements*, available at: www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Recognition-scheme-for-subject-benchmark-statements.aspx.

[9] Further information about JACS is available at: www.hesa.ac.uk/content/view/1776/649/.

further and higher education, the voluntary sector and all those involved professionally with the study and care of the historic environment.

In reconsidering the 2007 benchmark statement, the review group has retained previous terminologies and maintained a vision to make explicit the nature and standards of higher education programmes which carry the word 'archaeology' in their title, or in which archaeology is included as a significant component in the programme leading to the award.

# 1 Introduction

1.1 Archaeology provides a unique perspective on the human past and on what it is to be human. As the only subject that deals with the entire human past in all its temporal and spatial dimensions, it is fundamental to our understanding of how we evolved, how our societies came into being, and how they changed over time.

1.2 Archaeology may be defined as the study of the human past through material remains (the latter is an extremely broad concept and includes evidence in the current landscape, from buildings and monuments to ephemeral traces of activity; buried material, such as artefacts, biological remains, and structures; and written sources). This is in contrast to classics which focuses on the cultures that produced the Mediterranean civilizations of Ancient Greece and Rome; it is a subject with a more specific geographical and chronological focus which concentrates on ancient texts as well as artistic and architectural achievement. History is primarily concerned with oral, written and transcribed records and while there may be significant overlaps in historical, social, theoretical interests, particularly for the later periods, the study of history does not generally apply scientific techniques (for example, to investigate the movement of human populations or human diet) or fieldwork.

1.3 Archaeology's chronological range is from the earliest hominins millions of years ago to the present day. Its geographical scope is worldwide, and its scale of enquiry ranges from distributions and processes of change at the global scale and over millennia down to the actions of individuals.

1.4 Archaeology, a subject that has long been of interest to a wide general public, emerged as a separate subject in the mid-nineteenth century. During the last 150 years it has seen many changes of emphasis, but the main focus has remained the discovery and interpretation of the material remains of past societies. Some of the main changes have arisen through improved understanding of the nature of the material record and its interplay with the development of new techniques of recovery and analysis, others from theoretical developments affecting the kinds of questions asked by archaeologists about their material. The result today is a distinct subject with its own methodological and theoretical frameworks drawing on a rich archive of past work.

1.5 Throughout its history, archaeology has had a close association with a range of other subjects, initially mainly the humanities, but in recent decades increasingly incorporating a broad range of sciences and social sciences. Much research and teaching in archaeology is therefore multi or interdisciplinary: a particular topic or theme may be approached from different perspectives, and with different methodologies.

1.6 In the sciences there is also a recognition of the quality and significance of archaeological data for other subjects. One of the key characteristics of archaeological data is time depth, and the ability to examine the effects of process within a well understood chronological framework is vital for the study of contemporary concerns such as human impact on ecosystems, globalisation, and sustainability. The strong links with other subjects means that archaeology is often studied in joint or combined honours programmes (for example with history, geography, anthropology, classics and cultural heritage, English, natural sciences or forensic science) but it is a subject distinct from these. It is likewise related to but distinct from conservation science and heritage studies. As with single honours archaeology programmes, these degrees can be located in a range of faculties and schools or equivalent (for example arts, social science, science and so on). In most cases there are subject benchmark statements relevant to the non-archaeological components of joint and combined honours programmes.

1.7 Archaeology has been taught as a distinct subject in UK higher education providers since the early years of the twentieth century. Few incoming students have had the opportunity to undertake formal courses in archaeology. The educational background of incoming students is extremely varied: this diversity, embracing a range of subjects across the humanities and sciences all with some relevance to archaeology, provides a very stimulating environment for staff and students and is one of the strengths of archaeology programmes.

1.8 Mature students have traditionally provided a significant proportion of the intake, many entering with non-traditional qualifications but often with practical experience of the subject. The exit routes for archaeology graduates are equally varied: master's programmes (increasingly a prerequisite for research degrees and professional advancement); museums; the multi-faceted profession of archaeology; the wider tourism, heritage, and media sectors; and more general graduate positions.

1.9 The broad-based nature of the subject and the skills it gives graduates provides a strong grounding for a wide range of career paths. The archaeology graduate is extremely well equipped with transferable skills, from the mix of humanities and science training, engagement with theory and practice, and individual and team-based learning, together with the intellectual curiosity to continue learning, and the skills to benefit from challenging work environments. Archaeology also offers much non-professional involvement, via continuing education courses, local societies, museums, heritage groups and so on, so graduates not employed within archaeology have many opportunities for lifelong learning and to share their expertise within the community.

# 2 Defining principles and contexts for degree programmes

2.1 Archaeology within higher education firmly aligns itself with a liberal view of education and learning, while recognising the vocational application of the subject's knowledge base and skills. Understanding the interplay between theories and methods, central to any archaeology programme, is achieved by involving students directly in the recovery and analysis of primary material via involvement in departmental or other approved research projects. Departmental teaching and research programmes, therefore, commonly underpin each other. Because all archaeology departments are research active, and master's programmes and postgraduate research students are well distributed throughout the sector, archaeology undergraduates learn within lively and stimulating research cultures and work with primary research materials. The undergraduate learning experience frequently involves the same excitement of discovery as that of the professional researcher, as archaeology is one of a very few degree subjects in which an undergraduate can make a direct contribution through a new discovery.

2.2 Four key contexts provide the foundation on which archaeology degree programmes are based:

- historical and social
- ethical and professional
- theoretical
- scientific.

## The historical and social context

2.3 Archaeology is concerned with 'writing history' in the sense of furnishing and evaluating narrative accounts of past cultures and societies, both prehistoric and historic. Thus archaeology engages with other subjects studying the same cultures through other sources of evidence such as art, architecture, visual culture (variously analysed in terms of form, style, function, chronology, and social meaning), the biological and material sciences and, for the historical periods, texts and documents.

2.4 Archaeology is also embedded in the events, structures and development of the contemporary world. It is through this close association with present-day structures such as class, colonialism, ethnicity and gender that archaeology derives much of its power as an intellectual subject. Archaeology is often a contested subject, with different stakeholders disagreeing over interpretation and appropriate action towards the remains of the past and their display. The subject provides material resources through which identity is created at many levels in society.

## The ethical and professional context

2.5 Archaeology plays an important role in the environmental, development and planning sectors and is now recognised in many countries as central to key income generators, the heritage and tourism industries.

2.6 Employment opportunities are diverse and bring their own requirements for professional standards and bodies to monitor and develop these standards. In the UK there is the UK Institute for Archaeologists (their Codes, Guidelines and Standards are available via their website: www.archaeologists.net). In the wider historic environment sector, the Institute for Historic Building Conservation, the Institute for Conservation and the Society for Museum Archaeology (www.socmusarch.org.uk/) fulfil similar roles for the built historic

environment and for the conservation of cultural heritage respectively. The Institute of Archaeologists of Ireland (http://iai.ie/) covers both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Similar associations exist in other countries. The European Association of Archaeologists (www.e-a-a.org/), a membership association for the whole continent, promotes its own Code of Practice and Principles of Conduct. In many countries artefacts, monuments and landscapes of the past are protected through government guidance, national legislation and international treaty, for example, the Valletta and Faro Conventions, and the World Heritage Convention.

2.7 These developments have not only led to greatly increased employment opportunities for archaeology graduates but have encouraged archaeologists to reflect on the role of the past in the present and their own position within the process of gaining knowledge. Concerns within the professional sector have focused on demonstrating the public benefit of archaeological work, leading to greater potential for increased links between the various archaeological communities.

2.8 Archaeology graduates are also employed in a wide range of other occupations, many of them outside the heritage sector. Their success in gaining employment reflects the scope and depth of skills and attributes gained through an archaeology degree (see paragraph 4.3).

## The theoretical context

2.9 Archaeological theory has many facets, almost as many as the traditional divisions by period, region and continent. Perspectives vary enormously and the vitality of theoretical debate within the subject is one of its intellectual attractions as a higher education subject. It was greatly intensified when the orientation of the subject was redirected towards an anthropological archaeology employing an explicitly scientific methodology. This built on and added to the core tradition of culture history which recognises that archaeology is, in essence, a unique way of investigating, interpreting and presenting the past.

2.10 The combination of the two traditions has fostered evaluative and interpretative perspectives on the past. The result is a pluralistic approach to the study of the past, yet one characterised by a spirit of intellectual tolerance arising from the strong sense of the subject as a community of scholarship.

### Four elements of archaeology can be recognised

2.11 Archaeologists recognise many temporal and spatial scales from the micro to macro, from the individual to the level of an entire complex society. Integrating these levels of social and material activity as part of a multi-scalar approach unites the many period and geographical interests into a holistic study of past human life.

2.12 Social life is now conceived as interconnected, a network of relationships rather than simply a set of formal structures and institutions that need describing. Archaeological theory addresses the question of change and variation within such complex webs. It draws on the immense archive of past societies preserved through material remains to provide interpretations and to seek understanding of variation through comparison.

2.13 Archaeologists seek to place their findings within a wider context. Whether the scale is regional or global, the driving aim is to establish the significance of research within wider frames of reference within and beyond the subject. Archaeology is a critical element of interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research addressing many topical issues and themes.

2.14 The self-reflexive nature of contemporary archaeological theory and practice acknowledge the considerable public engagement with explorations of the past, and is cognisant of the manner in which the past informs the present. Archaeological education thus includes critical consideration of the history of the subject and the manner in which archaeological evidence has been and can be appropriated for a range of purposes.

## The scientific context

2.15 Archaeological science is the application of scientific techniques to archaeological problems, whose methodologies ultimately lie in a broad range of sciences including physics, chemistry, biochemistry, biology, medicine, geology, geography and materials science. The use of quantitative approaches, thinking scientifically and an awareness of scientific techniques should be part of the armoury of every archaeologist. Many techniques have more than one application, but major research themes include:

- the materials science of objects
- human economy
- human diet and human-animal relations
- the formation of the archaeological record
- human involvement in landscape evolution and climate change
- the identification and movement of human populations
- the development of human cognitive faculties and the origins and development of economic and social systems.
- remote sensing and prospection past landscapes and settlements.

2.16 Archaeological science has provided the chronometric frameworks which are indispensable to the ordering of our material. Many analytical techniques allow artefact characterisation, composition and manufacturing processes to be investigated, and for this an appropriate level of numeracy is required.

2.17 Conservation science has clarified the processes that cause the deterioration of artefacts, sites, and monuments, and has enabled the development of materials and techniques for their long-term conservation. Environmental science has added fundamental knowledge to our understanding of the human use of landscapes, subsistence and social life. Biomolecular techniques have enabled the identification of human dietary change, and the migration of human populations around the globe.

2.18 Information technology and numeracy are critical in the analysis, visualisation and interpretation of the past. The archaeological context in which science is embedded also ensures a healthy reflection on the methods and ethics of the wider science agenda.

## Implications for archaeology degree programmes

2.19 These four contexts are the foundation stones upon which all archaeology degrees, whether single or combined honours, are built. However, degree programmes vary in their aims, objectives and emphases as a reflection of the diversity, vitality, and confidence of the subject. The integration of the humanities and sciences underpins degree programmes given that this interdisciplinarity is as much philosophical as practical/methodological.

2.20 Particular degree programmes are located at different points within a triangle drawn between the complementary archaeologies of the humanities, sciences and professional practice. A department teaching single and combined honours degrees will probably position the programmes it offers at different locations within the tri-polar range. The triangle stresses the contexts, the interdisciplinarity, and the overarching practice which departments seek to

instil in students. The combination of practice, the commitment to primary data, and the focus on object and landscape-centred learning, provide the means to identify the extent of the subject.

# 3 Subject knowledge and understanding

3.1 Despite the interdisciplinary nature of archaeology, and the varied pathways through it that different archaeology programmes take, all graduates of degree programmes which contain a substantial component (at least 50 per cent) of archaeology possess a platform of knowledge and understanding in certain areas:

1 knowledge and understanding of the origins and development of archaeology as a subject
2 understanding of the intellectual vitality of archaeology, its theoretical basis, current debates over approaches to interpretation, and archaeology's relationship to other subjects and the wider public
3 appreciation of the historical, social, cultural, ethical, and political contexts of archaeological research, management, interpretation, and presentation
4 familiarity with the diverse sources of evidence used by archaeologists (including excavated, documentary, figurative, observational, artefactual, environmental and scientific)
5 familiarity with the basic concepts and terminology which underpin the subject (such as archaeological uses of assemblage, culture and style; approaches to site and object typology and taxonomy, and ancient technology; stratigraphic context; temporality; and landscape)
6 appreciation of the importance of the recovery of primary data and new information through practical experience in the field or through collections-based, records-based, or artefact-based study
7 critical awareness of methodologies for quantifying, analysing and interpreting primary data
8 understanding of the concepts and application of scientific methods used in collecting, analysing and interpreting archaeological data
9 understanding of the integration of chronometric, environmental and materials science data with archaeological models
10 understanding of the use of analogy and experiment in archaeological analysis
11 broad and comparative knowledge of the archaeology of a number of geographical regions and chronological periods
12 from specialised investigation, deep understanding of one or more distinct classes of archaeological material
13 appreciation of the fragile and non-renewable nature of the archaeological resource and the need for sustainable approaches to its use and conservation
14 understanding of the causes of variation in the reliability of different classes of evidence from archaeological contexts (such as taphonomy; cultural and non-cultural transformations; depositional processes; and recovery procedures)
15 understanding of the relationship between the practice of archaeology and the institutional contexts of that practice
16 knowledge of the legal policy, and ethical frameworks for research and professional practice in archaeology
17 appreciation of the wider public interest in archaeology and debates over public-professional engagement.

3.2 In the case of degree programmes where archaeology constitutes 50 per cent or less of the total (including joint and combined honours programmes, and cases where archaeology units may be taken as optional components within other kinds of modularised programmes), the delivery of an appropriate platform of knowledge and understanding is integral to the design of each individual archaeology module. In such situations both the knowledge and understanding attained by students, and the teaching environment, is consistent with the standards expressed in this subject benchmark statement. For guidance

on appropriate levels of attainment in the non-archaeology components of such programmes, reference is made to the relevant subject benchmark statement.

# 4 Skills

4.1 The range and depth of the skills acquired by an archaeology graduate varies according to the location of the degree programme within the humanities-science-practice triangle and the number of archaeology modules taken. However, the platform of knowledge and understanding outlined above ensures that any archaeology graduate has acquired a broad range of skills. The single honours graduate normally has all of the skills identified in this section, and the combined honours graduate normally has most of the skills.

## Subject-specific skills

4.2 As appropriate to the breadth and depth of the programme being pursued, students will be equipped to:

1 apply appropriate scholarly, theoretical and scientific principles and concepts to archaeological problems
2 practise core fieldwork techniques of identification, surveying, recording, excavation and sampling
3 practise core post-excavation/post-survey techniques such as stratigraphic analysis of field records, phasing and data archiving
4 practise core techniques of recording, measurement, analysis and interpretation of archaeological material
5 discover and recognise the archaeological significance of material remains and landscapes
6 interpret spatial data, integrating theoretical models, traces surviving in present-day landscapes and excavation data
7 observe and describe different classes of primary archaeological data, and objectively record their characteristics
8 select and apply appropriate statistical and numerical techniques to process archaeological data, recognising the potential and limitations of such techniques.

## Generic and employability skills

4.3 Archaeology graduates will be equipped with the following general and widely applicable skills:[10]

1 problem solving to develop solutions through creative thinking
2 producing logical and structured arguments supported by relevant evidence
3 planning, designing, executing and documenting a programme of primary research, working independently
4 assembling coherent research/project designs
5 marshalling and critically appraising other people's arguments, including listening and questioning
6 applying numeracy in practical contexts
7 demonstrating a positive and can-do approach to practical problems
8 an ability to demonstrate an innovative approach, creativity, collaboration and risk taking[11]
9 presenting effective oral presentations for different kinds of audiences
10 preparing effective written communications for different readerships
11 making effective and appropriate forms of visual presentation

[10] The language in this paragraph is informed by the Higher Education Academy's work on employability, and in particular (2012) *Pedagogy for employability,* Ann Pegg, Jeff Waldock, Sonia Hendy-Isaac, Ruth Lawton, 2nd edition, Higher Education Academy, York
[11] CBI (2011) Working Towards Your Future

12 making effective and appropriate use of relevant information technology
13 making critical and effective use of information retrieval skills using paper-based and electronic resources
14 collaborating effectively in a team via experience of working in a group, for example, through fieldwork, laboratory and/or project work
15 appreciating the importance of health and safety procedures and responsibilities (both personal and with regard to others) in the field and the laboratory
16 appreciating and being sensitive to different cultures, and dealing with unfamiliar situations
17 an ability to evaluate critically one's own and others' opinions, from an appreciation of the practice of archaeology in its changing theoretical, methodological, professional, ethical, and social contexts
18 an ability to engage with relevant aspects of current broad instrumentalist agendas such as global perspectives, public engagement, employability, enterprise, and creativity.

# 5 Teaching, learning and assessment

5.1 Given archaeology's variety of intellectual styles and traditions, the teaching and learning environments developed by different departments reflects their position within the humanities-science-practice triangle.

5.2 The interactions between teaching, research and primary data handling are key elements of the environment in which archaeology programmes are taught. Staff teaching within archaeology programmes are individually competent to deliver those programme units for which they are responsible and collectively able to provide the breadth and depth of specialist and non-specialist subjects embraced by the programme as a whole.

5.3 Students reading for an archaeology degree are taught within an environment conducive to learning, which is intellectually stimulating, and which embraces intellectual diversity. They have access to relevant published literature, information technology facilities, appropriate primary sources, archaeological materials (such as artefacts, archives, hand specimens, and comparative collections), field equipment and instrumentation (such as topographic survey systems and geophysical survey facilities) and, for science-based work, properly equipped and staffed laboratories (including layout space, sample preparation facilities and access to analytical apparatus). Given the importance for archaeology graduates of the development of technical skills in a variety of areas of archaeological practice, higher education providers facilitate access to the equipment and technical resources for the pursuit of these within the archaeology programmes they manage.

5.4 Archaeology students are provided with full documentation for their programme of study and each component within it, including clear learning objectives. This documentation includes information regarding contextual aspects of the programme, together with health and safety instructions for fieldwork and laboratory analysis, and guidance on ethical issues associated with archaeological practice.

5.5 An education in archaeology involves active engagement with the archaeological community and the wider community. Students participate in archaeological projects within and/or outside the higher education provider in which they are studying, and are made aware of relevant learned societies and statutory and professional bodies. Fieldwork is the primary means by which archaeological evidence is created, and constitutes an essential aspect of the engagement with professional practice and is therefore part of any programme.

## Teaching and learning methods

5.6 The balance of teaching and learning methods varies between programmes according to departmental missions, aims and interests. However, archaeology programmes in all higher education providers include a wide and diverse range of learning and teaching styles, as befits the intellectual focus of a subject whose core interest is the evolution and variety of human society, including teaching that is research-led. The best teaching and learning in archaeology is an interactive process from which students and academics gain mutual benefit because of the research-led environment for teaching. Students are encouraged to learn through experience, both as individuals and as members of defined teams, with practicals and fieldwork playing important roles in such provision. Directed reading represents a cornerstone for the establishment of the knowledge base.

5.7 The principal learning and teaching methods that an archaeology student may experience will depend on the aims and objectives of the programme, but are likely to comprise an appropriate combination of the following:

1 directed reading of the specialist literature (including books and periodicals)
2 field visits to appropriate monuments, structures and collections for direct experience of material covered by the programme
3 field investigation projects including excavations and surveys
4 hands-on practical exercises and science-based experiments, laboratory-based demonstrations, artefact handling and identification work
5 lectures that inform by capturing interest and exciting curiosity
6 placement or workplace experience with an archaeological organisation or museum
7 practical exercises and demonstrations (indoor and outdoor) in excavation and survey methodologies
8 seminars that provide the context for group work and small-group discussions
9 team-based exercises
10 tutorials and supervisions for structured regular contact with tutors and supervisors
11 participation in outreach, community archaeology and widening-participation activities
12 a range of self-guided student-centred learning practices.
13 tailor-made and generic online learning media.

5.8 Within most honours archaeology degree programmes there is a requirement that students undertake some form of independent research work, often in the form of project work and/or a dissertation presented in the later stages of the programme. Where field-based research is carried out, this represents an area of the student's learning in which mature and intelligent reflection will also be needed on the potential risks and moral and ethical issues associated with a proposed project.

## Assessment

5.9 Each archaeology programme contains an explicit assessment strategy as part of curriculum design. This strategy clearly and explicitly reflects the learning outcomes of the programme components, supports student learning and enables students to demonstrate progressive levels of attainment. The strategy reflects the variety of abilities and skills developed within the curriculum tied to the methods of teaching and learning adopted by the programme.

5.10 The assessment of archaeology programmes includes a mix of methods that are, overall, accessible to students from varying educational and cultural backgrounds within different learning situations. The procedures used for assessment cover the subject knowledge (breadth and depth), abilities and skills developed through the degree programme. The assessment of work undertaken in practical classes is most likely to be through exercises or project submissions. Seminar contributions may be assessed either directly or indirectly. Coursework may be part of the overall assessment of a student, or regarded as a pedagogic device for developing research and presentation skills, with formative assessment and regular feedback being provided by the tutor. Feedback and assessment may also be provided by the peer group.

5.11 Students of archaeology are likely to encounter a range of assessment methods during their programme reflecting the range of learning objectives. The following list provides a general indication of the range of current practice and is not meant to be a specific checklist against which to measure individual programmes:

1 an extended personal research project carried out over a prolonged period and involving primary data collection or extensive synthesis of secondary data, to assess powers of data assembly and analysis (including quantitative and qualitative analysis as appropriate), presentation, knowledge deployment, argument and reasoning
2 essays and assignments prepared to a defined timetable to assess knowledge and understanding of a topic, communication, analytical and presentation skills
3 examination through unseen and seen papers under timed condition requiring written essays and/or multiple choice questions to assess knowledge base, understanding and analytical skills
4 fieldwork and/or laboratory notebooks and reports to assess observational procedures, practical skills and methodologies
5 oral presentations to assess presentation and communication skills and group work
6 graphical presentations in a variety of media formats, including the production of poster presentations
7 observed participation of practical team-based exercises in the field, laboratory and/or classroom, to assess skills in collaboration and group problem solving
8 practical exams that test key skills (for example microscopy, osteological identifications and so on) in a laboratory but under examination conditions (for example unseen, timed and marked)
9 online examinations and electronic work books
10 annotated bibliographies
11 portfolios of work relating to practical exercises
12 reports on external placements
13 unseen tests.

# 6 Benchmark standards

6.1 This subject benchmark statement sets out both the minimum achievement and that which an average student will have demonstrated before they are awarded an honours degree in archaeology. It applies in full only to those students whose degree programme contains a substantial component (at least 50 per cent) of archaeology (see above for comments on programmes with lesser contributions).

6.2 A student at the very bottom of the honours class will have satisfactorily demonstrated achievement in most of the areas of performance listed below under threshold standard on a sufficient number of occasions or over a sufficient range of activities to give confidence that they have the range of knowledge, understanding and skills expected of graduates in archaeology. The vast majority of students will perform significantly better than the minimum standard, at the typical standard listed below. Each higher education provider has its own method of determining what appropriate evidence of this achievement is.

## Subject knowledge, understanding and skills

### Threshold standard

6.3 On graduating with an honours degree in archaeology, students should be able to:

1 demonstrate knowledge of the archaeology of a number of geographical regions
2 demonstrate knowledge of the archaeology of a number of chronological periods
3 demonstrate understanding of the principles and methods by which archaeological data are acquired and analysed
4 demonstrate practical experience of the recovery of primary archaeological data
5 describe the variety of approaches to understanding, constructing, and interpreting the past
6 describe the problematic and varied nature of archaeological evidence
7 gather and present archaeological evidence from primary and secondary sources
8 recognise the range of archaeological data
9 recognise the finite nature of the archaeological resource and the need for its conservation
10 research and present an extended piece of archaeological writing
11 demonstrate knowledge of archaeological field and laboratory skills, particularly in relation to the recording and description of primary data
12 describe the development of archaeology as a subject
13 demonstrate awareness of the social, cultural and political context of archaeological interpretation and practice
14 demonstrate awareness of the legal and ethical dimensions of archaeology.

### Typical standard

6.4 On graduating with an honours degree in archaeology, students should be able to:

1 demonstrate broad and comparative knowledge of the archaeology of a number of geographical regions
2 demonstrate broad and comparative knowledge of the archaeology of a number of chronological periods
3 demonstrate a good understanding of the principles and methods by which archaeological data are acquired and analysed
4 demonstrate a range of practical experience of the recovery of primary archaeological data and associated post-excavation methods

5 demonstrate knowledge and competence in archaeological field and laboratory skills, particularly in relation to the recording, description and analysis of primary data
6 demonstrate knowledge and competence in describing analysing and interpreting visual data
7 evaluate the variety of approaches to understanding, constructing, and interpreting the past
8 demonstrate comprehension of the problematic and varied nature of archaeological evidence in the field and/or in artefact-based, collections-based, or records-based studies
9 recognise and understand the finite nature of the archaeological resource and the need for its conservation
10 gather archaeological evidence from primary and secondary sources for purposes of analysis and interpretation
11 show an awareness of the issues involved in planning, designing, and executing a programme of field, laboratory or museum-based study
12 analyse and reflect critically upon a range of archaeological data
13 design, research and present a sustained piece of archaeological writing
14 demonstrate an understanding of the development of archaeology as a subject
15 apply an understanding of the social, cultural and political context of archaeological interpretation and practice
16 demonstrate a critical awareness of the legal and ethical dimensions of archaeology
17 apply an understanding of theoretical concepts to archaeology.

## Generic skills

### Threshold standard

6.5 On graduating with an honours degree in archaeology, students should be able to:

1 demonstrate awareness of relevant archaeological concepts and methods in non-archaeological situations
2 perform assigned tasks as part of a team, participating in discussion
3 bring together information and materials from different sources
4 identify problems and questions
5 undertake the analysis of factual information
6 recognise weaknesses in the arguments of others
7 produce a synthesis of the state of knowledge on a particular subject or topic
8 with guidance, undertake tasks independently
9 reflect on his or her own progress
10 express themselves clearly both orally and in writing
11 present knowledge or an argument in a way which is comprehensible to others
12 use IT to select and present information
13 make oral presentations utilising visual aids
14 demonstrate an ability to listen and comprehend when presented with new ideas or information
15 demonstrate visual skills in recognising and describing material remains
16 demonstrate classification skills in describing, categorising and collating data
17 understand the importance of health and safety in the work environment
18 appreciate contemporary debates relating to sustainability, employability and global perspectives.

## Typical standard

6.6 On graduating with an honours degree in archaeology, students should be able to:

1 apply an understanding of relevant archaeological concepts and methods in non-archaeological situations
2 work as a participant or leader of a team, contributing effectively to decision making and the achievement of objectives
3 bring together and effectively integrate information and materials from a variety of different sources
4 identify problems and evaluate answers or solutions
5 undertake the analysis of factual information in a systematic and coherent way
6 make a critical judgement of the relative strengths and weaknesses of particular arguments
7 produce an accurate synthesis of the state of knowledge on a particular subject or topic
8 act independently in planning and undertaking tasks
9 reflect their own progress, making use of feedback
10 both orally and in writing, express themselves with clarity and coherence
11 present knowledge or a sustained argument in a way which is comprehensible to others, including those unfamiliar with the material
12 use IT to select, present, and communicate information effectively and appropriately
13 make oral presentations utilising visual aids effectively and appropriately
14 demonstrate visual skills in recognising and describing material remains, and recognising anomalies
15 demonstrate an ability to listen, comprehend and reflect when presented with new ideas or information apply classificatory and analytical skills in collating and categorising data
16 demonstrate spatial awareness (both two and three-dimensional) in terms of reading plans, maps and landscapes
17 manage their time efficiently and effectively in relation to both practical and intellectual skills
18 apply ideas to new situations
19 understand the importance of health and safety in the work environment
20 critically understand and conceptually evaluate contemporary debates relating to sustainability, employability, and global perspectives.

# Appendix: Membership of benchmarking and review groups for the subject benchmark statement for archaeology

**Membership of the review group for the subject benchmark statement for archaeology (2014)**

## Review group membership

**Chair**

| | |
|---|---|
| Dr Mark Pearce | University of Nottingham |

**Higher education provider representatives**

| | |
|---|---|
| Professor Jim Crow | University of Edinburgh |
| Dr Paul Garwood | University of Birmingham |
| Professor Chris Gerrard | Durham University |
| Professor Carl Heron | Bradford University |
| Professor Audrey Horning | Queen's University Belfast |
| Professor Raimund Karl | Bangor University |

**Professional, statutory and regulatory body representatives**

| | |
|---|---|
| Dr Mike Heyworth MBE | Council for British Archaeology |
| Kate Geary | Institute for Archaeologists |

**Employer representative(s)**

| | |
|---|---|
| David Jennings | York Archaeological Trust |

**Student reader**

| | |
|---|---|
| Laura Eavis | University of Bournemouth |

**QAA Officer**

| | |
|---|---|
| Dr Tim Burton | Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education |

**Membership of the review group (2007)**
Details provided below are as published in the subject benchmark statement for Archaeology (2007)

| | |
|---|---|
| Professor T Darvill (Chair) | Bournemouth University |
| Dr R Doonan | University of Sheffield |
| Dr M Pearce | University of Nottingham |
| Dr G Philip | University of Durham |
| Professor I Ralston | University of Edinburgh |
| Dr A Sinclair | University of Liverpool and The Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for History, Classics and Archaeology |

**Membership of the original benchmarking group for archaeology**

Details provided below are as published in the original subject benchmark statement for Archaeology (2000)

| | |
|---|---|
| Professor G Barker (Chair) | University of Leicester |
| Professor J Collis | University of Sheffield |
| Professor T Darvill | Bournemouth University |
| Professor C Gamble | University of Southampton |
| Dr W S Hanson | University of Glasgow |
| Dr C Hills | University of Cambridge |
| Professor J Hunter | University of Birmingham |
| Professor M H Johnson | University of Durham |
| Professor E A Slater | University of Liverpool |
| Ms K Baker (Secretary) | University of Leicester |

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