

# The Royal Agricultural University

## Programme Specification:

# MSc Archaeology

**Academic Year 2023/24**

### **PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION [ACADEMIC YEAR 2023/24]**

This Programme Specification is designed for prospective students, current students, academic staff and potential employers. It provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the intended learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if he/she takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. More detailed information on the teaching, learning and assessment methods, learning outcomes and content of each module can be found in the Module descriptors.

## Section 1 – Material Programme Information

Quercus code	<a href="#">ARCH/ARCHC/ARCHD</a>			
Validating body	The Royal Agricultural University			
Teaching Institution	The Royal Agricultural University			
Subject Area	Land and Property Management (LPM)			
Entry Award(s)	MSc Archaeology PG Diploma Archaeology PG Certificate Archaeological Studies			
Final Award and exit route(s)	MSc Archaeology PG Diploma Archaeology PG Certificate Archaeological Studies			
Programme title	MSc Archaeology			
Location(s) of study	RAU Cultural Heritage Institute, Swindon			
Mode of study	Full time	One Year	Part-time	Two to Six Years
Language of study	English			
Programme start month	September			
Period of validation	September 2023-August 2029			
Name of Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists. CIFA does not have any formal 'recognition' of archaeological degrees, but this programme will assist in gaining Associate and Full Membership, along with experience gained in the professional, research, or voluntary sectors.			
Type of Accreditation	N/A			
Accreditation due for renewal	N/A			
Entry requirements	An Undergraduate Honours Degree (2:2 or above) from a UK university or overseas equivalent, or a professional qualification and/or experience considered to be equivalent to the above. For information on international qualifications, please, see our country specific pages. For countries not listed please contact <a href="mailto:admissions@rau.ac.uk">admissions@rau.ac.uk</a>			
Non-standard applications	We welcome applications from applicants with non-standard qualifications who are able to demonstrate knowledge, experience and skills developed in the workplace or elsewhere and which are relevant to the programme of study. Applicants will need to use their personal statement to provide further details supported by a CV. All non-standard applications will be considered by the Programme Manager on a case-by-case basis and applicants can expect that an interview may be required as part of the admissions process.			
English language	If English is not your first language, you will need to reach the requirements outlined in our English language requirements for the level of study. For postgraduate taught programmes this is IELTS Academic min. overall 6.5 with no element below 5.5(or equivalent). English language tests usually have a validity of 2 years from the date the test is taken.			

Interviews	Interviews are usually required for non-standard applications.
UCAS Code	N/A
QAA Subject Benchmark Statement(s) and other reference points	<p>This MSc programme has been designed to meet:</p> <p>(1) The QAA Characteristics Statement for Master's Degrees (September 2015)</p> <p>(2) The relevant elements of the QAA Archaeology Bench Mark statement</p> <p>(3) The professional standards criteria of the Institute for Historic Building Conservation (2012), the Chartered Institute for Archaeology (2016) &amp; the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (2019).</p> <p>In order to provide a coherent approach given the range of sources the CHI project group developed an internal benchmark which was "road tested" with professionals and then used to inform the development of the degree curriculum.</p>
Academic level on Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)	Level 7
Approval at AQSC	November 2022
Version	1.0

## Section 2 – Programme structure

The structure of all University awards complies with the University's Academic Regulations for Taught Programmes which includes information about the:

- Rules for progression between the stages of a programme;
- Consequences of failure for referrals, compensation and exist awards;
- Calculation and classification of awards.

For full time students, the programme will be delivered through intensive block teaching taking place across two consecutive teaching days per week. Part time students will undertake one teaching day a week two years. Students taking more than two years to complete will take blocks as available.

The MSc programme consists of four taught modules and a dissertation.

For those taking the MSc degree full-time, four modules are taken over two semesters (2 modules in each semester) with the dissertation extending through the summer to August.

For those taking the MSc degree part-time over two-years participants will take two modules per year (usually one per semester) with the dissertation being submitted in August of the second year.

Those who are taking the MSc degree part time over three, four, five or six years will be required to take a minimum of one module (30 credits) per year and submit the dissertation as the final element in the August of the final year.

Times for those taking the PG Diploma or PG Certificate are pro-rata the MSc Degree and are set out at the head of this section.

Each module will be supported by material on the RAU VLE (Gateway).

### **MSc Archaeology (180 credits)**

The accumulation of 180 credits (or more) at level 7 (of which 60 must be achieved from a Masters dissertation or agreed equivalent research-based project), through the assessment of programme elements as detailed below:

Module code	Module title	Level	Credit value	Core/ Optional	Semester
<b>Level 7</b>					
4729	Landscape Archaeology	7	30	Core	1
4730	Debates in Archaeology	7	30	Core	1
4731	Excavation and Post Excavation	7	30	Core	2
4735	Managing and Sustaining the Historical Environment	7	30	Optional	2
4734	Practical Conservation, Regeneration and Place Shaping	7	30	Optional	2
4736	Heritage Interpretation	7	30	Optional	2
4700	Dissertation	7	60	Core	1/2
	<b>Total Credits: MSc Archaeology</b>		<b>180</b>		

**PG Diploma Archaeology (120 credits)**

The accumulation of 120 credits (or more) at level 7 through the assessment of programme elements as detailed below:

Module code	Module title	Level	Credit value	Core/Optional	Semester
<b>Level 7</b>					
4729	Landscape Archaeology	7	30	Core	1
4730	Debates in Archaeology	7	30	Core	1
4731	Excavation and Post Excavation	7	30	Core	2
4735	Managing and Sustaining the Historical Environment	7	30	Optional	2
4734	Practical Conservation, Regeneration and Place Shaping	7	30	Optional	2
4736	Heritage Interpretation	7	30	Optional	2
	<b>Total Credits: PG Diploma Archaeology</b>		<b>120</b>		

**PG Certificate Archaeological Studies (60 credits)**

The accumulation of 60 credits (or more) at level 7 through the assessment of programme elements as detailed below:

Module code	Module title	Level	Credit value	Core/Optional	Semester
<b>Level 7</b>					
4730	Debates in Archaeology	7	30	Core	1
4729	Landscape Archaeology	7	30	Optional	1
4731	Excavation and Post Excavation	7	30	Optional	2
4735	Managing and Sustaining the Historical Environment	7	30	Optional	2
4734	Practical Conservation, Regeneration and Place Shaping	7	30	Optional	2
4736	Heritage Interpretation	7	30	Optional	2
	<b>Total Credits: PG Certificate Archaeology</b>		<b>60</b>		

**Section 3 – Programme overview and Programme Aims**

This programme is designed to provide a postgraduate qualification in archaeology. It is designed for students that may have limited specific knowledge of the discipline, who may wish to retain or gain both an academic understanding and practical skills. This will include two approaches:

An understanding of the current issues and debates within archaeology, ranging from ways to interpret the past (models, theoretical perspectives and approaches, material culture) the use of scientific investigations (such as aDNA, dating methods, isotopic and lipid chemistry) and the construction of historical and contemporary archaeologies through archival and field research. The programme will also challenge students to apply their skills to contested histories, where archaeological evidence may provide solutions to controversial debates,

through the contributions of scientific data, in-depth research and the power of uncovering untold narratives.

This thorough grounding in contemporary approaches and theoretical debates will allow students to understand and usefully engage with prehistoric and historical archaeology of the British Isles, and its connection to continental Europe and wider global archaeologies.

The overarching goal of the programme is to equip students with the traditional and cutting-edge practical skills they will require to undertake archaeological research in both the commercial and research sectors. To that end the programme will deliver skills to build competence from beginning to end of the archaeological process, including:

- Pre-excavation skills, including site selection, excavation planning and how to manage fieldwork projects. This may include preparatory works, such as compiling Written Schemes of Investigations, assessing, preparing and monitoring site Health and Safety, and negotiating site access, permissions and site visits.
- Archival research skills required to provide context and setting to archaeological sites. Accessing and interrogating GIS (Geographical Information Systems), databases and archival sources, and a familiarity with their construction, availability and limitations. Competence in reading and using open source geographical data, such as Ordnance Survey, National Mapping Programme, LIDAR, aerial photography, etc.
- Understanding and recording historic landscapes, through field survey, photography, remote sensing, aerial analysis, geophysical survey, landscape characterisation, and small-scale invasive investigations such as Shovel Test Pits.
- Archaeological excavation skills, including participation in practical work (where available); an understanding of the excavation processes, safe handling, artefact recovery and soil sampling methods, professional context recording, site photography (including drone photography and photogrammetry) and analysis of site stratigraphy.
- Post-excavation processes including site analysis, the identification and study of artefacts and ecofacts, scientific analysis and dating, creating publication illustrations, digital archive and storage, and the preparation of articles and archaeological reports for publication.

The programme will have an optional element for students to specialise in their chosen interest. The choices available include:

- Heritage interpretations – how to take the archaeological data into the public realm, theoretical issues, as well as practical methods (interpretation planning, understanding audiences, narrative and communication, media, etc.), for students wishing to engage in public-facing work, including museum, education, exhibition, or media work.
- Understanding buildings and landscapes – here the approach is understanding and recording standing buildings, dating buildings and their interiors, building archaeology and designed landscapes
- Managing and Sustaining the Historic Environment – how to manage a wide range of archaeological resources within the broader historical environment sector; for students who may wish to follow a career as curators or heritage professionals working for larger heritage organisations, such as Historic England or the National Trust.

- Practical conservation of historical buildings, from their likely defects to remediation methods, as well as the role of historic buildings in regeneration and place shaping. Useful for students who wish to specialise in building heritage as part of the planning sector or aiming to work in building consultancy.

The dissertation is the capstone to the programme, where the student can bring together the different elements of their learning, to write a considered piece of academic writing, based around primary research. The student is guided in their choice of subject, and through the programme will have regular discussions and seminars on structure and research methods. There will be flexibility in the form of the dissertation from very practical research to more formal academic investigations and reviews. The module is broken down into two semester-based sections. The first introduces students to the essential concepts involved in research. These include how to design and develop research questions, how to formulate aims and objectives, how to select appropriate theoretical and methodological approaches, and how to manage data. As well as providing them with a thorough grounding in research ethics, risk assessment, project planning and research management. The module will also introduce students to the many platforms, apps and processes they can use to support their work. The second semester is devoted to scaffolding student's self-led research through individual tutorials and group-crit events as well as sessions on structuring and writing for different outputs.

By the end of the programme students will be prepared for a career in archaeology and the management and interpretation of the physical past. The degree will also provide graduates with transferable skills to work in the wider heritage world, which might for instance include journalism, tourism, and broadcast media, as well as those with life-long learning aims. We will expect our students to graduate with a high level of autonomy and self-direction, the demonstration of adaptability, initiative and originality alongside accountability, integrity and ethical judgement.

#### **Section 4 – Programme intended learning outcomes and learning, teaching and assessment methods**

The learning outcomes employ those of the QAA Masters degree specification and the QAA Archaeology specification. They use established skill group descriptors which relate to national standards from the Institute of Historic Building Conservation and the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors.

#### **Knowledge and Understanding**

<b>LO no.</b>	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	<b>Module Code/s</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Chronology and context</b> Understand, communicate and draw upon the historical context and chronological frameworks of a range of landscapes and archaeological resources, including sequence and periodisation.	<b>4729 4730</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Approaches to Archaeology</b> Critically assess the principles, philosophies and ethical issues involved in the investigation, conservation, communication and management of all kinds of archaeological resources.	<b>4729 4730</b>

<b>3.</b>	<b>Investigating Landscapes</b> Understand and be able to use a wide range of techniques and methods available to investigate, analyse and record archaeological landscapes.	<b>4729</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Investigating Archaeological Resources</b> Understand how archaeological evidence is employed to understand the past, and be able to evaluate and select appropriate approaches to archaeological research.	<b>4729 4730 4731</b>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Excavation and Recording</b> Competently undertake a wide range of excavation-related processes, including the preparation of written schemes of investigation, trench placement and design, recovery and sampling methods, stratigraphic excavation methods, context identification, health and safety management, and risk assessment. Students will also be able to competently undertake all forms of on-site recording including context sheets, photography, drawn sections, plans, and elevations, and be able to prepare a site archive to a professional standard.	<b>4731</b>
<b>6.</b>	<b>Post-excavation</b> Competently undertake a wide variety of post-excavation processes, including site phasing and stratigraphy, Harris Matrix preparation, finds processing and identification, and interpretation. Students will also develop a specialisation in one particular artefact class (e.g. ceramics, environmental samples, bone, etc.).	<b>4731</b>
<b>Intellectual, Professional, Key skills</b>		
<b>LO no.</b>	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	<b>Module Code/s</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Personal Effectiveness</b> Demonstrate critical self-awareness, self-reflection and self-management; time management; sensitivity to diversity in people and different situations, and the ability to continue to learn through self-managed study, reflection on practice and experience.	<b>All modules</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Interpersonal Skills (Teamwork)</b> Demonstrate effective performance within teams and the ability to recognise and utilise individuals' contributions in group processes and to negotiate and persuade or influence others; team selection, delegation, development and management.	<b>All modules</b>
<b>3.</b>	Carry out effective two-way communication: listening, effective oral and written communication of complex ideas and arguments, using a range of media, including the preparation of reports/documents appropriate to the audience.	<b>All modules</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Digital Skills</b> (a) effective comprehension and professional use of IT including email and internet, databases, spreadsheets and word processing. (b) Understanding of digital recording, analysis interpretation and presentation. (c) Ability to apply digital skills to information gathering and problem solving across archaeological areas.	<b>All modules</b>

<b>5.</b>	<b>Critical &amp; Creative Thinking</b> Think critically and be creative: To manage the creative processes in self and others; The capability to organise thoughts, identify assumptions and evaluate statements in terms of evidence, detect false logic or reasoning, identify implicit values, define terms adequately and generalise creatively but appropriately.	<b>All modules</b>
<b>6.</b>	<b>Problem Solving &amp; Decision Making</b> Solve complex problems and make decisions: establish criteria using appropriate decision-making techniques, apply them to create and evaluate options and then implement and review decisions.	<b>All modules</b>
<b>7.</b>	<b>Research Design &amp; Implementation</b> Identify problems, and design and conduct research either individually or as part of a team.	<b>All modules</b>
<b>8.</b>	<b>Synthesis, Analysis &amp; Evaluation</b> Locate, synthesise, analyse and evaluate data and information from a wide range of sources to support and evidence solutions to problems.	<b>All modules</b>
<b>9.</b>	<b>Numeracy &amp; Statistical Literacy</b> Apply quantitative skills including methods for the handling and analysis of large numerical data sets. Understanding of the application of statistical tools to research questions.	<b>All modules</b>
<b>Programme specific skills</b>		
<b>LO no.</b>	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	<b>Module Code/s</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Research Strategies for Archaeological Investigation</b> Design and implement a research strategy for the investigation of a given archaeological resource (including landscapes), using information from excavation and fieldwork, as well as online resources such as HERs, lidar, aerial imaging, historic maps, and databases.	<b>4729 4731</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Conduct of Archaeological Investigation</b> Conduct, record, interpret, illustrate and report an archaeological investigation to professional standards. This will include the determination and articulation of appropriate methods, approaches, and ethics.	<b>4729 4731</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Analysis and Significance</b> Use multiple lines of evidence, drawn from a range of disciplines to place a given archaeological resource into a wider context and to communicate its heritage significance to a professional audience.	<b>4729 4730</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Data Analysis</b> Collect, analyse, manipulate and interpret quantitative and qualitative data. They will also be able to understand, comment on and analyse issues raised by the data, using appropriate theory to engage with the data and reach defensible conclusions.	<b>4700 4731</b>
<b>Section 5 – Learning and Teaching Strategy</b>		
<b>Learning and Teaching Strategy</b> The practice of archaeology requires practitioners to have knowledge across a range of		

historical and applied disciplines from landscape approaches to archival research. Archaeology is an applied science, having the attributes and requirements of a professional practice that makes it amenable to being taught in a reflective setting, with opportunities for lab work, practical fieldwork and fieldtrips.

This programme has specifically been designed to meet the needs of postgraduate learners many of whom may be combining study with work and/or caring or other responsibilities. Teaching is designed to be fully flexible, to allow full participation for both part-time and full-time students.

All sessions are offered in a blended format and learners can choose whether to attend any session in-person or to participate remotely, as best suits their needs. All sessions, including practical workshops and (where possible) field trips, are recorded live and made available for viewing to support learners who prefer to access the sessions asynchronously. This also ensures that recorded material is available to all for revision purposes throughout the module. Learners who are frequently unable to participate synchronously may request additional tutorials to discuss and consolidate session content.

Sessions are built around exercises to support and scaffold the learning process, and to provide valuable opportunities for peer-to-peer learning. Material is taught in workshop format combining formal elements, such as lectures, with more hands-on exploratory or consolidatory exercises, for example field-trips, discussions, 'live' group research to explore or apply a particular concept, and embedded problem-based learning.

We know that learners have many and varied motivations and ambitions for taking this programme. We therefore concentrate on drawing out and articulating these with the learner to create a tailored route through the programme, whether that be tailored training opportunities, targeted reading, or support in designing assessment projects that will be relevant to their needs.

This programme recognises that there are many demands on learner's time and that these may fluctuate over the course of the programme. We therefore provide for a flexible spectrum of participation. Teaching for each module takes place over one day per week, so a full-time learner will participate in two full days of teaching each week. These are concurrent, currently a Thursday and a Friday, and will not vary across the year. We ask learners to complete a minimum of 30 credits (one module) per academic year with a maximum time allowance of six years to complete the full 180 credit programme. Should a learner's personal circumstances change, they may switch between full and part time modes of study. They are also able to move between the PG Certificate, PG Diploma, and MSc programmes by the completion of the appropriate number of core credits.

Our building, seminar rooms, lecture theatre, laboratory and toilet facilities are fully accessible with parking provision for Blue Badge holders at the front door. Care is taken to ensure practical sessions and field trips are accessible to as wide a range of students as possible and module leaders are always happy to discuss ways of improving access to learning.

## **Section 6 – Assessment Strategy**

The full MSc programme comprises four modules and a dissertation project.

All four taught modules are assessed by course work. The intention of the course work assessments is to replicate the wide range of analyses, syntheses, reports and products which may reasonably be expected from an individual working professionally in the archaeology sector. Module leaders will work individually with students to help them

develop research topics, methods and approaches that will not only meet the assessment criteria but will also help them achieve their wider aims for the programme.

Assessments are focussed around professional outputs that are typically produced by trained archaeological specialists. These include written schemes of investigation, desk-based assessments, site reports, artefact reports, and post-excavation reports.

There is a great deal of scope within this to pursue individual interests in terms of the content and subject of study, the methodologies adopted and the approaches used. Module leaders will provide in-depth discussion and consultation on assessment items, individually and through group work, to ensure that they are of maximum utility to the learner.

Alongside tutorials and discussions, formative, in-class exercises will be used to scaffold and develop the learner's writing skills. Learners may take part in group-crits on their work in progress, sessions on understanding and incorporating feedback/feed-forward, and in-class supported writing exercises. These will provide valuable formative feedback and allow peer-to-peer learning to take place.

The dissertation project provides students with the opportunity to complete a significant extended project combining many of the elements and approaches of the modules in an in-depth study. The aim here is to enable participants to demonstrate their ability to deliver a sustained piece of original and innovative work, based on primary fieldwork and supported by a thorough understanding of context and theoretical and methodological approaches.

For full-time learners the dissertation module runs from day one, providing support for the final assessment. Learners have opportunities for group and individual discussion alongside taught content on research design, methodology and management. Part-time learners, including PGDip and PGCert students, are most welcome to audit 4700 Dissertation in order to strengthen their research work in preparation for assessment on other modules.

We encourage and support all learners to approach heritage organisations in order to negotiate 'live' projects for their various pieces of assessment work. Real projects help to build the learner's professional network and introduce them to reality of working with stakeholders. The public- and/or sector-facing nature of these projects also ensures good visibility for the learner's work, helping them to establish their professional reputation.

The usual outputs of the archaeology sector are sizeable professional reports. The programme therefore seeks to familiarise students with longer-form writing. Assessments are generally focused on the production of a single 6000-word output to align with the longer industry-standard formats. Writing exercises throughout the programme will help learners to understand how to structure these longer pieces and generate good flow. Learners will be supported through formative tasks, learning how to position their writing, produce drafts, devise methodology, respond to feedback, and self-edit their work. Many of the exercises undertaken in class will feed directly into the learner's ongoing research project, helping them to visualise the longer-form writing in a coherent and structured way.

This programme is very much designed as a stepping-stone into the historic built environment sector. Learners are therefore encouraged to treat the assessments and final dissertation project as opportunities for portfolio- and network-building. To this end, learners are encouraged and supported to negotiate 'live' projects with heritage organisations in the development of their assessed work and to produce useful and impactful, public- and/or sector-facing outputs. Dissertation projects may also be used to

lay the ground work for funding bids for future projects in the sector.

	<b>Level 7</b>
<b>Coursework</b>	100%
<b>Exam</b>	0 %
<b>Practical</b>	0%

## **Section 7 - Course work grading and Feedback**

Assessment is an integral part of the learning experience of students. All University programmes are assessed by a range of assessment activities, each developed to provide the most appropriate means of demonstrating the student's achievement of a specified learning outcome. An assessment may assess more than one learning outcome.

The University operates standard pass criteria which can be found in the RAU Academic Regulations; (paragraphs 137 – 153).

The normal basis for awards will be the overall average score in the final assessment, graded as follows:

Distinction weighted average of	70%
Merit weighted average of	60% - 69%
Pass weighted average of	40% - 59%
Fail average	0% - 39%

In addition to assigning a percentage mark to the work, the tutor adds comments; usually about the strengths and weaknesses of the piece as well as advice about improving the work. All assessment decisions are subject to internal moderation and external scrutiny by the programme's External Examiners.

## **Section 8 – Employability**

This programme is designed to provide a broad-based introduction to the rapidly changing discipline of archaeology. It takes an integrated archaeological approach to both the understanding of sites and landscapes, and also to their long-term sustainable management. All coursework is undertaken to appropriate professional standards as set out by Historic England, CBA, IFA, etc. to allow students to build an impressive portfolio.

Students are moreover encouraged to approach archaeology and/or heritage organisations in order to negotiate 'live' projects for their various pieces of assessed work. They could, for example, author a written scheme of investigation for a community archaeology group, or put together a National Lottery Heritage Fund bid for a local charity. Real projects such as these help to build the learner's professional network and introduces them to reality of working with stakeholders. The public- or sector-facing nature of these projects also ensures good visibility for the learner's work and helps them to establish their professional reputation in the sector. In consequence the course is suited to those who are seeking professional or consultancy roles where this breadth of knowledge is seen as desirable.

The degree will enable graduates to pursue careers in landscape archaeology, field archaeology, cultural heritage, and applied heritage, and to work in the private sector, local authorities, heritage organisations and museums which require specialists with an archaeological focus. The student-centred nature of the programme will allow students to develop industry specialisms alongside a broad-based introduction to the subject.

### **Section 9 – Enhancing the Quality of Learning and Teaching**

The programme is subject to the University's rigorous quality assurance procedures which involve subject specialist and internal peer review of the course at periodic intervals, normally of 6 years. This process ensures that the programme engages with the applicable national Subject Benchmarks and references the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.

All programmes are monitored on an annual basis where consideration is given to:

- External Examiner's Reports
- Key statistics including data on retention and achievement
- Results of the Student Satisfaction Surveys
- Feedback from Student Course Representatives
- Annual Programme Monitoring