The Royal Agricultural University

Programme Specification:

MSc Conservation and Management of Historic Buildings

2025/26

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION [ACADEMIC YEAR 2025/26]

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 they take 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 Specifications.

Section 1 – Material Programme Information

Criteria	Detail
Validating body	The Royal Agricultural University
Teaching Institution	The Royal Agricultural University
Subject Area	Land and Property Management
Entry Award(s)	MSc Conservation and Management of Historic Buildings Postgraduate Diploma Conservation and Management of Historic Buildings Postgraduate Certificate Historic Building Studies
Final Award and exit route(s)	MSc Conservation and Management of Historic Buildings Postgraduate Diploma Conservation and Management of Historic Buildings Postgraduate Certificate Historic Building Studies
Programme title	MSc Conservation and Management of Historic Buildings
Location(s) of study	RAU Cultural Heritage Institute, Swindon
Full time study	One Year
Part-time study	Two to Six Years
Language of study	English
Programme start month	September or January
Period of validation	September 2024 - August 2029
Name of Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body	See below
Type of Accreditation	This degree will not be accredited by a PSRB in the short term although participants will be fully prepared for the membership requirements of the IHBC. The programme meets core accreditation requirements of RICS under the Land and Resources (AssocRICS) pathway. Participants being given a grounding towards and Planning and Development (MRICS) pathway.
Accreditation due for renewal	N/A
Entry requirements (this should be the standard University entry requirements unless otherwise approved by the Academic Board, and include UCAS entry profile for UG programmes and IELTS)	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 admissions@rau.ac.uk
Non-standard application	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 Leader 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
Quercus Code	CMHB/CMHBD/CMHBC
HECoS Code	100585 – Conservation of Buildings
QAA Subject Benchmark Statement(s) and other reference points	This MSc programme has been designed to meet: • Archaeology (including Master's) 2022 • The professional standards criteria of the Institute for Historic Building Conservation (2012) • The Chartered Institute for Archaeology (2016) • The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (2019)
Academic level on Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)	Level 7
Approval at AQSC	February 2023
Version	1.0 February 2023 2.0 April 2024: removal of 4735, replaced with 4762 3.0 All module codes replaced with FHEQ level 7 codes

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.

The programme will be delivered as a form of block teaching built around two intensive teaching days per week for full-time students and one teaching day a week for part-time students over two years. Students taking more than two years to complete will take blocks as available.

The MSc programme consists of four x 30-credit taught modules and a 60-credit dissertation.

For those taking the MSc degree full-time, four modules are taken over two semesters (two 30-credit modules in each semester). For those beginning their studies in September, the

dissertation will extend until the end of the following August. For students beginning their studies in January, the dissertation will begin in semester two, extend over the Christmas period, with a deadline in January.

For those taking the MSc degree part-time over two-years, participants will take two 30-credit modules per year (usually one per semester) with the dissertation being submitted in August of the second year, for September starters and January of the second year, for January starters students.

For those taking the MSc degree part time over three, four, five or six years, the expectation is that they will study a minimum of one module (30 credits) per year and submit the dissertation as the final element in either August of the final year (for September starters), or January (for January starters). Detailed study plans are to be agreed with the programme leader.

MSc Conservation and Management of Historic Buildings (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/ Elective	Semester
7C006	Understanding Buildings and Landscapes	7	30	Core	1
7C008	The Past in Principles and Practice	7	30	Core	1
7C009	Practical Conservation, Retrofitting and Sustainability	7	30	Core	2
7C010	Regeneration & Placemaking in the Historical Environment	7	30	Core	2
7C001	Dissertation	7	60	Core	1 and 2
	Total Credits: MSc Conservation and Management of Historic Buildings		**180**		

PG Diploma Conservation and Management of Historic Buildings (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/ Elective	Semester
7C006	Understanding Buildings and Landscapes	7	30	Core	1
7C008	The Past in Principles and Practice	7	30	Core	1
7C009	Practical Conservation, Retrofitting and Sustainability	7	30	Core	2
7C010	Regeneration & Placemaking in the Historical Environment	7	30	Core	2

Module code	Module title	Level	Credit value	Core/Elective	Semester
	Total Credits: PG Diploma Conservation and Management of Historic Buildings		**120**		

PG Certificate in Historic Building 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/Elective	Semester
7C006	Understanding Buildings and Landscapes	7	30	Core	1
7C009	Practical Conservation, Retro-fitting and Sustainability	7	30	Elective	2
7C010	Regeneration and Placemaking in the Historical Environment	7	30	Elective	2
	Total Credits: PG Certificate in Historic Building Studies		60		

Section 3 – Programme Overview and Programme Aims

This programme is designed to equip learners to pursue careers in historic built environment conservation, management and regeneration. It focuses on developing essential skills, methods and approaches to the historic environment as well as inculcating the initiative, adaptability, decision-making and self-direction required for consultancy work. There is an emphasis on personal and professional development throughout the programme.

It is particularly suitable for learners with qualifications and/or experience in a related sector who wish to move into built heritage, or for those already working within the field who wish to specialise or extend their role.

The course has two main strands:

The first focuses on the investigation and understanding of historic buildings: how they relate to the wider environment and historical context, understanding their structure, construction and history and how they might be recorded. There is a focus on understanding the value and significance of historic assets.

The second looks at the conservation of buildings: the ethical issues surrounding building conservation, practical methods of building conservation and restoration, and how the built heritage can contribute to regeneration and the enhancement of public value.

The overarching goal of the programme is to equip students with the tools they will require to understand, conserve and manage historic buildings. To that end, the programme will:

- Offer an innovative, dynamic and research-informed programme built around contemporary issues, challenges and developments in historic building conservation and management in the light of rapid social, economic and environmental change.
- Provide a robust ethical, theoretical and practical framework for exploring and managing historic buildings.

- Enable participants to apply knowledge creatively to the analysis of complex, incomplete or contradictory areas of understanding.
- Engage participants in the production of new knowledge through a substantial piece of research in their dissertation or professional practice product
- Develop an in-depth, inquiry-led, understanding of a "toolbox" of skills including:
  - Understanding of Building Context and Significance
  - Building Recording and Analysis
  - Identification of Problems with Historic Buildings
  - Practical Conservation Skills
  - Research Theory and Project Design
  - Project Management, Teamwork and Leadership
  - Heritage Management, Planning and Law
  - Community Engagement, Audience Development and Marketing

By the end of the programme students will have built up an impressive portfolio of work demonstrating a high level of originality and professional integrity which will enable them to embark on a career in the built heritage sector.

Section 4 – Programme Sustainability

This programme is aligned to UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11 which aims to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. It also contributes towards several other SDG goals. It does this by training buildings and development practitioners in the identification of sustainable future uses for historic and traditional buildings and the sustainable design of retrofitting solutions for the same. The will ensure that historic and traditional buildings:

- perform as efficiently as possible in terms of energy and other resource use (SDG7, SDG12 & SDG13);
- retain historically captures carbon and reduce the need for the production of new materials (SDG12);
- be more resilient to the impacts of a more severe climate (SDG13);
- provide viable future uses for historic buildings (SDG8);
- explore and support the development of new, climate positive materials (SDG9 & SDG12);
- save money and contribute towards an economically viable future (SDG8);
- help communities to become more resilient (SDG10);
- reduce fuel poverty (SDG1 & SDG10) and produce efficient water use (SDG12);
- provide better standards of housing and workplace environments, which increases the wellbeing of users (SDG3).

Section 5 – Programme Intended Learning Outcomes

The learning outcomes employ those of the OfS Sector Standards, QAA Master's 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.

On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to demonstrate the following Learning Outcomes (LOs):

Knowledge and Understanding

LO no.	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	Module Code/s
1.	**Architectural History** Understand the broad outlines of building history, architectural styles and movements	7C006
2.	**Environmental and Social Context** Contextualise the inter-relationship between building form and the physical, economic and social environment	7C006
3.	**Tools for Investigating Buildings** Understand the methods and techniques used to investigate, record and analyse historic buildings in order to understand their history, evolution and significance.	7C006
4.	**Conservation Practice** Identify conservation issues with historic buildings and the design of appropriate conservation management plans and strategies through the understanding of significance and value.	7C008 7C009
5.	**Legal Protection** Understand the legal basis for historic building protection and conservation.	7C008
6.	**The Heritage Ecosystem** Recognise the professional, ethical, economic, social, political and policy environment of historic building conservation.	7C008

Intellectual, Professional, Key skills

LO no.	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	Module Code/s
1.	**Leadership** (a) Identify appropriate leadership styles for different situations: to enable/mentor, enhance/coach and motivate others in order to improve performance (of self and others) (b) Recognise and address ethical dilemmas and to apply ethical values to situations and choices.	All modules
2.	**Personal Effectiveness** 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.	All modules
3.	**Interpersonal Skills (Teamwork)** 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.	All modules

4.	**Communication** 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.	All modules
5.	**Digital Skills** (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 several areas.	All modules
6.	**Critical and Creative Thinking** 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.	All modules
7.	**Problem Solving and Decision Making** 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.	All modules
8.	**Research Design and Implementation** Identify problems, and design and conduct research either individually or as part of a team.	All modules
9.	**Synthesis, Analysis and Evaluation** Locate, synthesise, analyse and evaluate data and information from a wide range of sources to support and evidence solutions to problems.	All modules
10.	**Numeracy and Statistical Literacy** 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.	All modules

Programme specific skills

LO no.	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	Module Code/s
1.	**Research Strategies for Historic Buildings** Design a research strategy for the investigation of an historic building.	7C008 7C006 7C009
2.	**Conduct of Building Survey** Conduct, record and report a building survey to professional standards.	7C006 7C009 7C001
3.	**Analysis and Significance** Use multiple lines of evidence to place a given historic structure into a wider context and to communicate its heritage significance.	7C006 7C010 7C001
4.	**Conservation Management** Identify conservation issues and prepare appropriate conservation management plans and strategies.	7C008

5.	**Re-use and Redevelopment** Advise on the re-use and redevelopment of historic buildings.	7C009
6.	**Conservation Project Management** Employ project management to plan and manage conservation projects to professional standards	7C010

Section 6 – Approach to Learning and Teaching delivery

Learning and Teaching Strategy

The conservation and management of historic buildings requires practitioners to have knowledge across a range of historical and applied disciplines from architectural history, sustainability and legal frameworks. Like other areas of applied heritage, it has the attributes and requirements of a professional practice that makes it amenable to being taught in a reflective setting, with opportunities for 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.

Here at the RAU, we are always looking for ways to better support our students. We recognise that a number of our students may be working or have caring responsibilities alongside studying which can sometimes make it difficult to attend every teaching session in person. As such we have the ability for you to join lectures and seminars through an alternative digital format in prior discussion with your programme leader. Please note that for international students on a student visa, you are expected to attend your classes in person. Remote delivery is not a UKVI-authorised mode of attendance for the taught element of your course and therefore non-attendance would affect your student visa.

Please note that this type of study participation is only available to registered UK-based students and for Postgraduate Study.

We strongly recommend students attend field trips and other practical or hands-on sessions in person. Your programme or module leader will be happy to discuss this with you beforehand.

Our 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 discussions, 'live' group research to explore or apply a particular concept, group-crit sessions, supported writing exercises, and 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. 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 7 – Approach to Assessment

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 cultural heritage 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 historic building specialists. These include historic buildings reports, conservation management plans, heritage impact statements, and regeneration plans.

There is a great deal of scope within these 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 assessment and opportunities for group and individual discussion alongside taught content on research design, methodology and management. Part-time learners, including those enrolled on PGDip and PGCert, are most welcome to audit the first eight weeks of the 7C001 Dissertation module in order to strengthen their long-formal writing and research methodology.

The usual outputs of the historic built environment 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.

Overall, the programme is taught and assessed through:

	Learning and Teaching			Assessment		
	Directed	Independent	Placement	Exam	Practical	Coursework
Year 1	22.8%	77.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%

Section 8 – 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 116 – 129).

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

Distinction weighted average of	70% and above
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, tutors provide written feedback for all assessments which normally includes the strengths and weaknesses of the piece as well as advice about improving the work. Individual feedback is provided within 20-working days of the deadline for submission. All assessment decisions are subject to internal moderation and external scrutiny by the programme's External Examiners. Students must ensure they retain all coursework in case the External Examiner(s) wishes to see it.

Section 9 – RAU Graduate Framework

At the RAU we have chosen five values to underpin our learning community. These are the values which we will all work by and for which we want the RAU to be known for. We aim for our graduates to be:

Collaborative

We believe in the power of working together. We are stronger as a community of practice - inspiring each other, identifying shared goals, and providing reciprocal support leads to greater success.

Open-minded

We are receptive to new ideas and we value the diversity of experiences and skills. We are committed to listening to everyone across the RAU community.

Resourceful

We adopt creative approaches to achieve our goals while setting higher standards, promoting professionalism and sustainability.

Responsible

Individually and collectively we take accountability for our actions working with integrity to achieve the highest ethical standards.

Inclusive

We acknowledge the fundamental value and dignity of all individuals and are committed to maintaining an environment that seeks to eliminate all forms of discrimination and respects diverse traditions, heritages, and experiences.

Section 10 – Progression

This programme is designed to provide a broad-based introduction to the rapidly changing discipline of historic building conservation. It takes an integrated approach to both the understanding of the buildings and also to their long-term sustainable management. In

consequence, the course is suited to those who are seeking curatorial or consultancy roles where this breadth of knowledge is seen as desirable.

Students are moreover encouraged to approach heritage organisations to negotiate 'live' projects for their various pieces of assessed work. They could, for example, write a conservation management plan for a local church, or put together a National Lottery Heritage Fund application for a local community organisation. Real projects such as these help to build the learner's professional network and introduce them to the reality of working with stakeholders. The public- and/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 their chosen sector.

The degree will enable graduates to pursue careers in historic building conservation, cultural heritage, archaeology, and applied heritage and to work in local authorities, heritage organisations, museums and the private sector which require specialists with a buildings and structures focus.

Section 11 – Student support, wellbeing and counselling

The [University](#) is offering a wide range of support to all RAU students, including practical advice and guidance as well as emotional support.

Disability and Neurodivergent support

We support disabled & neurodivergent students and students with long-term health conditions. These disabilities include dyslexia, mental health diagnoses, ADHD, autism, mobility challenges, sensory impairments and many more. Students are encouraged to make contact with Student Services as early as possible by emailing: studentservices@rau.ac.uk . When you tell us about a disability, you will be offered support based on your specific needs, which can include:

- **Alternative exam arrangements** such as extra time, rest breaks, or a smaller room.

- **Access to support workers** such as study skills tutors, specialist mentors, readers and scribes.

- Access to assistive technology (AT), which helps remove barriers to learning, communication and participation. The AT can help students who face difficulties with taking notes, organisation and time management.

Mental Health Support

Student Services has a dedicated team who are here to support you with the emotional challenges that can crop up during university life. They take a wide-ranging approach to mental health support, and the team ensure they are available for informal chats as well as providing in-depth support for students with emerging or existing mental health conditions.

The team also offer mental health support in the form of daily drop-in sessions, weekly group Time to Talk sessions, mental health workshops, awareness and campaign days and 1:1 confidential meetings for when students face challenges to their wellbeing.

Student Services can also refer students for counselling sessions with an external agency if they are required. They can also signpost you to our Student Assistance Programme, providing 24/7 care, support and advice.

Academic Support Tutor Programme

All students have access to the Academic Support Tutor (AST) programme, which provides high-quality academic support for students. ATS provide timetabled group tutorials and individual support for students who are most at risk. Group tutorials focus on providing high-quality academic support at the appropriate academic level; advice and guidance in relation to the course; and advice about making study choices on the course (in line with the AST Handbook). Individual support focuses on continuation and may be in person or online.

Section 12 – 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 Reports
- Key statistics including data on retention and achievement
- Results of the Student Satisfaction Surveys
- Feedback from Student Delegates from programme committees
- Feedback from Student-Staff Liaison committees
- Annual Programme Monitoring