

# Council for British Archaeology

## **CBA Factsheet 3c: Studying archaeology at postgraduate level**

Although it is possible to get a job in archaeology with an undergraduate degree, it is increasingly common to study for a postgraduate degree before a career in the subject. If you wish for an academic career as a university lecturer then a postgraduate degree is essential.

There are various different kinds of postgraduate degree in archaeology. Some offer courses of study (taught courses), while others are based largely on independent research. Many offer a very specialised introduction to specific aspects of archaeology, while other are quite general in scope. You will need to think carefully about what sort of archaeological career you are interested in and pick courses that cater to your interests.

We have broken down our information into sections to make it easier for you to find what you need.

### **What are the different kinds of postgraduate course?**

Most taught courses last for one year and lead to an MA or MSc qualification. In Scotland, the qualification is usually an MPhil or MLitt instead of the MA. At Cambridge or Oxford it will be an MPhil or MSt. A very few courses include work experience and last for two years. Research degrees will be either a one year's Masters degree, usually an MPhil in England, or a three-year PhD or other Doctoral degree.

Some MA or MSc courses are very general and cover a wide range of archaeology. These are designed as "conversion" courses for people with degrees in other subject who wish to convert to archaeology, and can usually be recognised by their title as simply MA or MSc Archaeology. You should ask the department you are interested in whether your undergraduate degree is in a suitable subject.

A Postgraduate Diploma (PG Dip) is almost a Masters, but excludes the research dissertation. A Postgraduate Certificate (PG Cert) is half a Diploma. These may be awarded if the full year is not completed for whatever reason.

## **Where do I find out what taught courses are being offered?**

A good place to begin to find an archaeology degree course is the department where you studied for your BA or BSc degree. Many will also usually offer postgraduate degrees. Otherwise, you can look on the [Postgrad website](#), [Target Courses](#) or [What Uni?](#) and search for courses that interest you.

To help you place where each university is, an interactive map of UK universities is [available online](#).

Entrance requirements for degrees vary, and it is always a good idea to consult the postgraduate admissions tutors in the departments in which you are interested (who can give more specific details) but in general you will need a good (2:1) undergraduate degree as a minimum requirement. This does not always have to be in archaeology.

## **What sort of specialist degree courses are available?**

Archaeology is a broad subject linking with many others, including geography, history, social sciences, maths, physics, biology, chemistry, art, religion, landscape management, conservation, forensic science and technology; it therefore can be studied from many different perspectives. Generally, however, these break down into period/location-related perspectives (Medieval Archaeology, Roman Archaeology, Egyptian Archaeology etc) or discipline ethos-based perspectives: Archaeological Science, Marine Archaeology, Landscape Archaeology etc).

Common titles and specialist subjects for taught postgraduate courses include:

- ❖ Bioarchaeology
- ❖ Osteoarchaeology
- ❖ Classical Archaeology (Roman and Greek)
- ❖ Egyptology
- ❖ Environmental Archaeology
- ❖ Field Archaeology
- ❖ Forensic Archaeology
- ❖ Heritage
- ❖ Historical Archaeology
- ❖ Medieval Archaeology
- ❖ Landscape Archaeology
- ❖ GIS (Geographical Information Systems)
- ❖ Maritime Archaeology
- ❖ Museum Studies

However, the range of titles changes constantly and there is a wide variety of specialisms to choose from; many only taught at one university, eg MA Archaeology and Screen Media, MA Experimental Archaeology, MA Industrial Archaeology, MA Military Archaeology.

The word archaeology does not always feature in the course title, so you will need to search widely using other words, for example art history, history, artefacts studies, conservation, culture, heritage.

Some degrees are geared towards the needs of becoming a professional field archaeologists, while others are designed to support further progression onto research degrees.

## **How do I choose a research degree?**

You will already have a topic that interests you, or you can ask a lecturer if they have a suitable range of topics that they think might be worth investigating. You may have done a topic for your undergraduate dissertation that could be explored in more detail. If you have a broad area of interest, it would be worth looking at university website staff pages to find a lecturer covering the same area and contact them for likely topics. Most universities now expect students to study for a Masters degree first before embarking on a PhD, but you may find some who would be prepared to accept you straight onto a PhD, if you had top grade for your undergraduate degree.

## **How do I apply for a place on a degree?**

Applications to postgraduate courses are handled by each university separately. There is no central service, unlike for undergraduate degrees with [UCAS](#) (the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service).

There is no better way than to narrow the choice of courses through [postgrad.com](#) and then look at university websites for details of each course and the expertise of the staff in the department. Email, phone or write to the universities who run the courses you are interested in to ask for further information.

You need to consider both the course you are applying for as well as the university itself – its accommodation, clubs and societies, facilities, location etc. The Students' Union of most universities is often a good source of information.

## **How can I fund postgraduate study?**

Fees for courses are set individually by each university and can vary widely.

Individual universities may run bursary schemes to which you could apply for funding, but competition for these is often fierce. You may be able to arrange a loan with your bank as a Professional and Career Development Loan. You should arrange to talk with your bank in person to see if they are willing to arrange a loan. Many Masters students fund themselves through loans from their families, through savings or through working at the same time as studying.

Research degrees are usually funded through postgraduate studentships where the university gets money from a government-funded research council to support the student and the research. There are no fees and the research student may get a grant to live on.

One option that makes affording a postgraduate degree easier is to study part-time (2 years for a Masters and 6 years for a Doctorate). This makes it easier to work at the same time and support yourself financially. You should ask of your desired university whether they will accept part-time study or research.

This [Postgraduate Studentships](#) website is a good source of advice on postgraduate funding.

**For further information, please contact:**

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