

Archaeological Sciences MSc programme specification

Academic Year:	2026/2027
Degree Awarding Body:	The University of Bradford
Main Location:	City Campus
Qualifications Framework:	HE Qualifications of UK Degree Awarding Bodies (FHEQ: QAA 2024)
Target degree award:	Master of Science in Archaeological Sciences [FHEQ Level 7]
Intermediate exit awards:	Postgraduate Diploma or Postgraduate Certificate [FHEQ Level 7]
Programme Admissions:	UK and international students
Programme Start Month:	September
Programme modes of study:	1 year full-time or 2 years part-time

Please note: The University has a set of terms and conditions for all students accepting an offer to study on a course here at Bradford. This is called the Student Contract. This document sets out the Terms and Conditions which apply when an offer of a place on a programme of study at the University of Bradford is accepted. View our Student Contract for further details. Information about this programme and its modules has been published in advance of the academic year to which it applies. Every effort has been made to ensure that the information is accurate at the time of publication, but changes may occur given the interval between publishing and commencement of teaching. Any change which impacts the terms and conditions of an applicant's offer will be communicated to them.

Recent changes

1. March 2024: Annual changes for 2024 academic year.
2. July 2025: Annual Changes for the 2025 academic year, including changes to academic regulations
3. September 2025: Fixed publication errors with document reformat
4. July 2026: Minor document changes for 2026 entry and revised admissions

About our programme

Archaeology engages the entire human past over time and space. It is fundamental to our understanding of how we evolved, how our communities developed, and how we study, preserve and interpret our past.

The MSc Archaeological Sciences is designed to give graduates in Archaeology and related subjects a systematic training in the application of modern scientific methods to answer archaeological questions. It provides the necessary practical, analytical and interpretative skills to apply a wide range of specialist approaches in archaeology. At Bradford, our distinctive approach emphasises the integration of the natural and physical sciences in this enquiry. We aim to provide excellence in a comprehensive range of archaeological topics, with emphasis on both teaching and research, believing the two activities to be mutually dependent. In 2021 the University of

Bradford was awarded a coveted Queen's Anniversary Prize for its research in archaeological technology, techniques and its influence on practice, policy and society. We have also attracted over £9M funding for research capabilities, which are available for use during the MSc. Among the distinctive features of this programme are hands-on experience in our laboratories, a range of option choices which allow specialisation, and a substantial individual research dissertation.

The programme aims to prepare students not only for research in archaeology and archaeological science, but also to further career prospects in all areas of mainstream archaeology and heritage. The programme is well-suited both to students who wish to use it as a foundation from which to commence further research or as vocational training to enhance employment prospects.

Programme aims

The programme is intended to:

- A1. Provide graduates in archaeology and related subjects with a systematic training in the application of modern scientific methods to archaeology.
- A2. Provide a flexible programme of study that reflects areas of staff expertise.
- A3. Encourage development of independent learning skills, by providing a supportive, structured environment.
- A4. Develop high-level subject knowledge and understanding and provide training in discipline skills to enable graduates to pursue further research or careers in archaeological science.
- A5. Develop critical and analytical problem- solving skills and personal transferable skills to prepare students for careers in non-cognate fields.

Programme learning outcomes

On successful completion of the programme students will be able to:

- 1. Demonstrate a critical awareness of practical, analytical and interpretative approaches in archaeological science.
- 2. Use a selected range of methods and techniques within archaeological science and interpret the generated data.
- 3. Apply critical understanding in the wider context of the discipline.
- 4. Possess advanced laboratory and/or field skills in the study of (according to module selection): artefacts, biological evidence, archaeological prospection, scientific dating methods and cultural resource management.
- 5. Critically evaluate professional literature in a chosen area and related disciplines
- 6. Communicate conclusions in writing and orally to specialist and non-specialist audiences, working effectively in groups, manage and appraise their own learning and research.
- 7. Manage time effectively when undertaking complex and extended tasks.

8. Confidently use information technology to critically review, synthesise and carry forward professional research in a specialised area.
9. Identify individual learning needs and carry out an achievable learning plan to meet them.
10. Apply instrumental techniques to the analysis of archaeological materials.
11. Use mathematical and statistical approaches to interpret archaeological data.
12. Design and complete a substantial work of independent study.

Programme structure

The programme comprises of three compulsory modules that provide appropriate background in theory and application of scientific methods in archaeology and three option choices to develop specialist skills and concludes with a dissertation.

The emphasis of the programme is on the learning of fundamental scientific principles across several disciplines (e.g. quantitative methods, statistics, physics, chemistry, biology and materials science) and applying these to archaeological contexts, drawing on areas of staff expertise.

The core module 'Professional Development' starts by guiding students to identify their own learning needs, and the resources to address them, and goes on to prepare students for their research project, including planning of research, research design, time management, ethics, and health and safety. It is expected that students who successfully complete the entire programme will be fully prepared to undertake research at MPhil or PhD level.

In addition to completing the core modules in 'Nature of Matter and Instrumental Analysis' and 'Chronology, Isotopes and Biomolecules', students can also choose from a variety of optional modules and may choose to focus on specific pathways:

- Human Bioarchaeology which focuses on subsistence and health through studies of biomarkers in human and non-human hard tissue and environmental issues which impact on humans, including environmental change.
- Landscape Archaeology which focuses on understanding and interpreting landscapes in the past using scientific methods.
- Biomolecular Archaeology which allows students to specialise in the use of biomolecular methods to study both human remains and artefacts.

The pathways are intended to guide students through appropriate modules; students typically take at least 20 credits of modules that cover specific techniques, which include a strong hands-on element. These modules are chosen to suit the student's interests and aspirations, in discussion with the Programme Leader. Pathways are indicative rather than prescriptive and students may choose to take the optional modules offered in any combination, subject to timetabling.

Programme modules

Students study 120 core credits and select three optional modules for the remaining 60 credits – usually taken as two option modules in Semester 1 and one option module in Semester 2.

Students studying the course on a part-time basis will normally complete 60 credits per year. The dissertation will be undertaken over two years and submitted at the end of the programme. The module sequence for part-time students will begin with the module 'Professional Development' and the remaining modules selected on an individual basis in consultation with the Programme Leader.

Table B: MSc Archaeological Sciences (FHEQ Level 7) Modules: Select 3 Options

Mod. Code	Module Title	Select	Credit	Period
ARC7041-B	Professional Development	Core	20	Academic Year
ARC7045-B	Nature of Matter and Instrumental Analysis	Core	20	Academic Year
ARC7056-B	Chronology, Isotopes and Biomolecules	Core	20	Semester 2
ARC7034-E	Dissertation	Core	60	Semester 3
ARC7058-B	Human Bioarchaeology	Option 1	20	Semester 1
ARC7044-B	Archaeological Prospection & Visualisation	Option 2	20	Semester 1
ARC7048-B	Site Evaluation Strategies and GIS	Option 3	20	Semester 2
ARC7059-B	Separation Science & Mass Spectrometry	Option 4	20	Semester 2
ARC7036-B	Grave Concerns: Investigating the Archaeology of Death and Burial	Option 5	20	Semester 2

Learning, teaching and assessment strategy

Learning and teaching takes into consideration the learning outcomes, the nature of the subject, and the need for students to take responsibility for their own learning as part of this advanced taught programme.

The thematic modules are delivered in a combination of formal lectures, student-led intensive seminars/tutorials, and extensive practical instruction. Coursework (laboratory and field reports, worksheets, essays) is geared towards demonstrating relevant knowledge, understanding and professional skills in principal approaches to the application and use of scientific methods in archaeology. Elements of group work are part of core specialist modules; communication skills are tested in both written and oral form in several modules.

The assessment strategy is designed to support the learning outcomes of each specific module. It uses a wide range of assessment methods, including coursework (worksheets, critiques, laboratory reports, research design, essays), exams (practical tests), and oral presentations.

Assessment elements are regularly structured in a way that allows students to benefit from formative learning towards summative assessment.

The degree progresses through a spiral curriculum, with each teaching/assessment block developing and building on prior learning. The underlying knowledge and understanding is then drawn upon in the Dissertation (around 15000 words) which encompasses a substantial piece of original research, ultimately assessed for its publishable merit.

Assessment, Continuation and Award Regulations

This programme follows the Assessment, Continuation and Award regulations published on the University's website for postgraduate courses ([Regulation 9](#)).

Admission requirements

We are proud to be [one of the most inclusive universities in the UK](#). All our students have potential, and we believe that as many people as possible should have the chance to benefit from higher education, no matter what their background or circumstances.

We take the time to understand the background of our applicants, understand their journey to education, and make decisions based on an applicant's potential to thrive at university and beyond.

People thinking of studying with the University of Bradford don't need to wait for the start of the year to contact our Disability Service. The University can arrange for anyone to talk to this team about what support is on offer at Bradford including an invitation to our Get Set Day. To contact the Disability Service please complete the [request support form](#).

For international students, the level of English required is listed on the [University of Bradford English language requirements website](#). Exceptionally, holders of a UK degree awarded within 2 years prior to entry to the Bradford programme may be exempt from these English test requirements. International applicants who do not meet the IELTS requirement can take a [University of Bradford pre-sessional English course](#).

The typical academic entry requirements for MSc Archaeological Sciences are a first degree in Archaeology or another relevant discipline, normally with a second-class degree (2:2 or 2:1), or equivalent or higher, for UK/home students. Admission will be judged on an individual basis for overseas students, at an equivalent level to UK entry requirements. For North American students, normally a GPA of at least 2.5 on a scale of 4.0 is required, or an equivalent. Examples of other equivalent international qualifications for entry are provided on the [University of Bradford page for a country or region](#).

Other relevant qualifications and past experience will also be considered for admission to the programme. Admissions are made on the basis of demonstrated ability, qualifications, experience, references, and, occasionally, interviews. A completed application form, references, official transcripts, or a list of programmes/modules and grades/marks stamped by the applicant's undergraduate department or student registry are required of all applicants.

Applications are welcome from students with non-standard qualifications or mature students (those over 26 years of age on entry) with significant relevant experience. Assessment of this evidence will usually be in the form of submitting a portfolio. [Complete an enquiry form](#) to speak to someone about your situation in the first instance.

If applicants have prior certificated learning or professional experience which may be equivalent to parts of this programme, the University of Bradford has procedures to evaluate and recognise this learning to provide applicants with exemptions from specified modules or parts of the programme. Find more information about [recognition of prior learning decisions](#) on the University website.

Information in this document is for the contemporary recruitment cycle and was accurate at time of publication. The current tariff and accepted qualifications for entry onto the programme is published at the online course page: <https://www.bradford.ac.uk/courses/pg/archaeological-sciences/>