

Human Bioarchaeology and Palaeopathology 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	[FHEQ Level 7]
Intermediate/exit awards:	Postgraduate Diploma or Postgraduate Certificate	[FHEQ Level 7]
Programme Admissions:	UK and international students	
Programme start date:	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. July 2025: Change to programme title and including change to assessment regulations.
2. July 2026: Annual changes for 2026 entry including revised admissions and document format.

About our programme

MSc Human Bioarchaeology and Palaeopathology emphasises the study of archaeological human remains within their funerary context. It provides advanced instruction in the identification and analysis of human skeletal remains, morphological variation, and how to assess pathological conditions affecting the skeleton.

The programme can be used either as vocational training or as a foundation from which to commence further research. Students undertake a substantial individual research dissertation, either from a choice of topics or developed from their own research interests

Programme team and facilities

This MSc builds upon the Department of Archaeological and Forensic Sciences' extensive research expertise in human bioarchaeology, osteology, palaeopathology and biomolecular

archaeology. Among the distinctive features of this programme is access to a world-renowned collection of British archaeological human remains (approximately 5,000 individuals) and hands-on experience in state of the art bioarchaeology, isotope and cross-sectional imaging laboratories. The course integrates biological and archaeological evidence to address problem-oriented research themes, while upholding robust ethical standards.

The Human Bioarchaeology teaching team are part of a wider team that were awarded the prestigious Queen's Anniversary Prize in 2021 for developing archaeological technology and techniques and our influence on practice, policy and society. 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. We have attracted over £8M funding for research capabilities, which are available for use during the MSc.

Core programme aims

- A1. Provide graduates in archaeology, anthropology, biosciences, and related subjects with advanced practical and theoretical instruction in the analysis and interpretation of human remains within their archaeological and/or forensic context, through the integration of biological and contextual evidence.
- 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 human bioarchaeology.
- A5. Develop critical and analytical problem-solving skills and personal transferable skills to prepare students for careers in non-cognate fields.

Programme learning outcomes

Graduates of MSc Human Bioarchaeology and Palaeopathology, a FHEQ Level 7 degree award, will be able to demonstrate achievement of all of the following learning outcomes:

- 1. Demonstrate a critical awareness of the theory and practice in the analysis of skeletonised human remains by appreciating the relevant underlying anatomical, biomechanical and taphonomic principles.
- 2. Use appropriate methods and techniques within human bioarchaeology and interpret the generated data.
- 3. Understand and apply methods and techniques in the wider context of the discipline.
- 4. Possess advanced skills in the identification, description and recording of human remains.
- 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 their 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. Possess advanced skills in the analysis and interpretation of pathological conditions.
11. Confidently interrogate clinical data when investigating palaeopathology.
12. Design and complete a substantial work of independent study.

Programme assessment strategy

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

Assessment elements are regularly structured in a way that allows students to benefit from formative learning and formative assessment towards summative assessment. Formative assessments are embedded in the first semester modules Human Bioarchaeology and Musculoskeletal Anatomy, to help students transition from undergraduate to postgraduate learning. Informal presentations of lab results are used in Human Bioarchaeology and in Palaeopathology laboratory sessions to provide formative guidance on topics being studied, as well as developing important oral communication skills.

Skills acquisition is assessed via practical tests and in-class student presentations. Written assessment will consist of summative essays/critiques and skeletal reports which are geared towards demonstrating relevant knowledge, understanding and professional skills in principal approaches to the analysis and interpretation of archaeological human remains and the application of scientific methods or archaeological theory. Communication skills are assessed in both written and oral form in several modules.

The final element of the programme is a dissertation. It is expected that students who successfully complete their dissertation will be fully prepared to undertake research at MPhil or PhD level.

Programme learning and teaching strategy

Learning and teaching take 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 programme draws heavily on areas of world-leading research expertise and facilities in Archaeological and Forensic Sciences at the University of Bradford. The thematic modules are

delivered in a combination of formal lectures, student-led intensive seminars/tutorials, and extensive practical instruction.

The degree progresses through a spiral curriculum, with each teaching/assessment block developing and building on prior learning. The 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 dissertation research. This module encompasses research/project design, time keeping, ethics, and health and safety.

Programme structure

MSc Forensic Science is a 180-credit master's degree studied across the University of Bradford autumn, spring and summer study periods. It comprises core compulsory modules that contain a blend of theoretical and practical applications in the analysis of archaeological human remains in semester one (Musculoskeletal Anatomy, Human Bioarchaeology), complemented by Professional Development, which allows students to develop an individual learning plan and programme of study. A significant element of semester two is the 30-credit module on Palaeopathology. Optional modules provide opportunities for students to acquaint themselves with a wide range of analytical approaches to the study of human remains (Chronology, Isotopes and Biomolecules) or an appreciation of the mortuary evidence through time (Grave Concerns). The semester two component of Professional Development prepares students for their dissertation research project.

The programme is offered full-time and part-time.

Full-time student journey - 60 credits per study period

Students study four core modules and select one module option to take in Semester 2. Students then complete 60 credits in Semester 3 (the summer) as an extended dissertation.

**Table 1: Full-time modules (FHEQ Level 7) for
MSc Human Bioarchaeology and Palaeopathology**

Module Title	Credit	Autumn (S1)	Spring (S2)	Summer (S3)
Human Bioarchaeology	20	ARC7058-B	-	-
Musculoskeletal Anatomy	30	ARC7057-C	-	-
Professional development	20	ARC7041-B		-
Palaeopathology	30	-	ARC7029-C	-
CHOICE OF Chronology, Isotopes and Biomolecules OR Grave Concerns: Investigating the Archaeology of Death and Burial	20	-	ARC7056-B OR ARC7036-B	-
Dissertation	60	ARC7034-E		

Part-time student journey - 3 modules a year

In the typical part-time version of the course, most students study 60 credits in year 1, start their dissertation then complete 60 taught credits and the dissertation in year 2.

**Table 2: Part-time modules (FHEQ Level 7), Year 1, for
MSc Human Bioarchaeology and Palaeopathology**

Module Title	Credit	Autumn (S1)	Spring (S2)
Human Bioarchaeology	20	ARC7058-B	-
Professional development	20	ARC7041-B	
CHOICE OF Chronology, Isotopes and Biomolecules OR Grave Concerns: Investigating the Archaeology of Death and Burial	20	-	ARC7056-B OR ARC7036-B

**Table 3: Part-time modules (FHEQ Level 7), Year 2, for
MSc Human Bioarchaeology and Palaeopathology**

Module Title	Credit	Autumn (S1)	Spring (S2)	Summer (S3)
Musculoskeletal Anatomy	30	ARC7057-C	-	-
Palaeopathology	30	-	ARC7029-C	-
Dissertation	60	ARC7034-E		

Assessment, continuation and award regulations

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

The typical academic entry requirements for MSc Human Bioarchaeology and Palaeopathology are a first degree in Archaeology or another related 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. Examples of other equivalent international qualifications for entry are provided on the [University of Bradford page for a country or region](#). For North American students, normally a GPA of between 2.6 and 3.0 on a scale to 4.0 is required, or an equivalent.

For international students whose first language is not English, 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 have the academic requirements but who do not meet the IELTS requirement can take a [University of Bradford pre-session English course](#).

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. If applicants are not sure if they have everything needed to join this MSc, they should [complete an enquiry form](#) to speak to someone about their 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/human-bioarchaeology-palaeopathology/>