

MSc Human Bioarchaeology and Palaeopathology Programme Specification

<https://www.bradford.ac.uk/courses/pg/human-osteology-and-palaeopathology/>

Academic Year:	2025/26
Degree Awarding Body:	The University of Bradford
Target degree award:	Master of Science [Framework for Higher Education Qualifications Level 7]
Interim awards:	Postgraduate Diploma, Postgraduate Certificate [FHEQ Level 7]
Programme Admissions:	September
Programme Duration:	1 year full-time
Approved by Faculty Board:	March 2025

Please note: This programme specification 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. Upon commencement of the programme, students will receive further detail about their course and any minor changes will be discussed and/or communicated at this point.

Minor Modifications Schedule

1. July 2025: Change to programme title and including change to assessment regulations.

Introduction

The MSc Human Bioarchaeology and Palaeopathology emphasises the study of archaeological human remains within their funerary context. It builds upon Archaeological and Forensic Sciences' extensive research expertise in human bioarchaeology, palaeopathology and biomolecular archaeology. The course integrates biological and archaeological evidence to address problem-oriented research themes, while upholding robust ethical standards. It provides advanced instruction in the identification and analysis of human skeletal remains, morphological variation, and how to assess pathological conditions affecting the skeleton.

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 laboratories. 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 £6M funding for research capabilities, which are available for use during the MSc.

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 Aims

The programme is intended to:

- 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

On successful completion of this programme, students will be able to:

- 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.

Curriculum

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

Please note: The curriculum may change, subject to the University's programme approval, monitoring and review procedures.

Curriculum

Students study 100 core credits and select 20 credits of options in Semester 2. Students study 60 credits in Semester 3 as an extended dissertation.

Module Code	Module Title	Module Type	Module Credit	FHEQ Level	Study Period
ARC7058-B	Human Bioarchaeology	Core	20	7	Semester 1
ARC7057-C	Musculoskeletal Anatomy	Core	30	7	Semester 1
ARC7041-B	Professional Development	Core	20	7	Academic Year
ARC7029-C	Palaeopathology	Core	30	7	Semester 2
ARC7056-B	Chronology, Isotopes and Biomolecules	Option	20	7	Semester 2
ARC7036-B	Grave Concerns: Investigating the Archaeology of Death and Burial	Option	20	7	Semester 2
ARC7034-E	Dissertation	Core	60	7	Semester 3

Students will be eligible to exit with the award of Postgraduate Certificate if they have successfully completed 60 credits and achieved the award learning outcomes (LO1-9). Students will be eligible to exit with the award of Postgraduate Diploma if they have successfully completed at least 120 credits and achieved the award learning outcomes (LO1-11).

Students will be eligible for the award of Degree of Master if they have successfully completed at least 180 credits and achieved the award learning outcomes (LO1-12).

Learning and Teaching Strategy

The learning and teaching strategy 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 programme draws heavily on areas of world-leading research expertise and facilities in Archaeological and Forensic Sciences. 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.

Assessment Strategy

The 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 oral 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.

Assessment, Continuation and Award Regulations

This programme follows the Assessment, Continuation and Award regulations published on the University's website (<https://www.bradford.ac.uk/about/legal-and-governance/governance/regulations/>) for postgraduate courses (Regulation 9)

Study Abroad

This programme is not eligible for in-session Study Abroad opportunities. Students are welcome to explore available short-form and summer opportunities via our International Opportunities team: <https://www.bradford.ac.uk/exchanges/current-students/>

Admission Requirements

We take into consideration several factors when assessing your application. It's not just about your grades; we take the time to understand your personal circumstances and make decisions based on your potential to thrive at university and beyond.

Academic Admission Requirements

The standard entry requirements for this postgraduate programme are that all applicants have at least a Bachelor's degree with honours classified as lower second-class (2:2, or equivalent) in a related discipline. Other relevant qualifications and previous experience will also be considered for admission to the programme.

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 3.0 on a scale of 4.0 is required, or an equivalent. Students from other countries can find details of equivalent qualifications by visiting the specialist webpages at:

<https://www.bradford.ac.uk/international/country/>

Admissions are made based on 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 (where these are relied on for admission) are required of all applicants.

Language Competency

Applicants whose first language is not English must have IELTS at 6.0, with no sub-test score lower than 5.0, or the equivalent overall score in another recognised test. See the Entry Requirements webpage for details of recognised tests:

<https://www.bradford.ac.uk/international/entry-requirements/> If required, you can improve your English proficiency by taking a pre-sessional English language programme with the University. For more information on the PreP visit:

<https://www.brad.ac.uk/courses/other/pre-sessional-english-language-programme/>

Access and Recognition of Prior Learning

Applications are welcome from students with non-traditional qualifications, or with significant personal and professional experience.

If applicants have prior certificated learning or professional experience which may be equivalent to parts of this programme, the University has procedures to evaluate and recognise this learning in order to provide applicants with exemptions from specified modules or parts of the programme: www.bradford.ac.uk/teaching-quality/prior-learning/

The University of Bradford has always welcomed applications from disabled students. To discuss adjustments or to find out more about support and access, you may wish to contact the Disability Service before you apply: [Disability Service - University of Bradford](#)
