

Programme Specification

MA Archaeology (full-time)

PFTARCHM

MA Archaeology (part-time)

PPTARCHM

For students entering in 2027/28

This document sets out key information about your Programme and forms part of your Terms and Conditions with the University of Reading.

Awarding Institution	University of Reading
Teaching Institution	University of Reading
Length of Programme	MA Archaeology (full-time) - 12 months MA Archaeology (part-time) - 2 years
Accreditation	N/A
Programme Start Dates	September
QAA Subject Benchmarking Group	Archaeology

Programme information and content

This programme provides a flexible, systematic and advanced understanding of the human past through the study and interpretation of archaeological approaches and evidence, with a strong emphasis on independent research. The programme offers the opportunity to develop archaeological knowledge by studying a variety of timescales and issues through a series of period, theme or skills-based optional modules. Students can enhance their studies through a vocational and workplace-based placement.

The MA Archaeology at Reading provides a distinctive focus on the diversity of the human past and how archaeology and heritage can provide long term perspectives on present and future issues and challenges. Students will develop a critical perspective on our understanding of the past and its relevance to today, through a deeper understanding of our interdisciplinary methods, quality of the evidence and theoretical approaches. This course prepares students for employment within the Heritage and environment sectors and beyond, and provides key training to continue into doctoral research.

Programme Learning Outcomes

-MA Archaeology (full-time)

During the course of the Programme, you will have the opportunity to develop a range of skills, knowledge and attributes (known as learning outcomes) For this programme, these are:

Learning outcomes	
1	a systematic and comprehensive understanding of theoretical and practical approaches in archaeology and their relevance to their own research or advanced scholarship and contemporary challenges in the world today

2	a critical awareness of current issues and/or new insights in the discipline, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of archaeological research and professional practice
3	originality in the application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in archaeology and their applicability to issues today
4	a conceptual understanding that enables the student to evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in archaeology and to evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses
5	ability to deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively and to make sound judgements in the absence of complete data
6	skills in communicating their conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences
7	self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level, including for a major research project through their dissertation
8	transferable skills necessary for employment and continuing professional development in archaeology, heritage, environment and other sectors

You will be expected to engage in learning activities to achieve these Programme learning outcomes. Assessment of your modules will reflect these learning outcomes and test how far you have met the requirements for your degree.

To pass the Programme, you will be required to meet the progression or accreditation and award criteria set out below.

Module information			
The programme comprises 180 credits, allocated across a range of compulsory and optional modules as shown below. Compulsory modules are listed.			
Compulsory modules			
Module	Name	Credits	Level
ARMDSS	Dissertation	60	M
ARMTCA	Theoretical Approaches and Contemporary Challenges in Archaeology	20	M
The remaining 100 credits will be taken from the list of optional modules from the School of Archaeology, Geography and Environmental Science or from the list of modules from Institution-Wide Language Programme up to a maximum of 20 credits.			
Part-time or flexible modular arrangements			
The programme can be taken part-time over two years. In the first year of study, a student will normally be required to: complete the compulsory modules ARMTCA Theoretical approaches and contemporary challenges in Archaeology (20c) and to attend all of the taught classes on preparing for research in the compulsory module ARMDSS Dissertation and to complete the assignments Research Proposal (5% of the module mark) and Conference Presentation (5% of the module mark) to support dissertation research in the			

summer of the first year. It is recommended that a Part-time student takes optional modules totalling no less than 40-credits and no more than 60-credits in the first year.

In the second year of study, a student will submit the dissertation (90% of the module mark) to complete the compulsory module ARMDSS Dissertation (60c), and complete all remaining optional modules, normally c. 40-60 credits of the total 100 optional module credits for the MA Archaeology degree programme.

With the exception of the marks for ARMDSS for students on the part-time degree, which will be spread over two years, all modules are assessed in the year in which they are taken.

Placement opportunities

There are opportunities to participate in departmental research projects, including fieldwork and post-excavation; and students may have the opportunity to work with our commercial arm Quaternary Scientific (QUEST). QUEST provides archaeological, forensic and environmental scientific services to industry. Students have the opportunity to take an optional research and placement module as part of the programme.

Study abroad opportunities

N/A

Optional modules

The optional modules available can vary from year to year. An indicative list of the range of optional modules for your programme can be found online in the Course Catalogue. Details of optional modules for each part, including any additional costs associated with the optional modules, will be made available to you prior to the beginning of the Part in which they are to be taken and you will be given an opportunity to express interest in the optional modules that you would like to take. Entry to optional modules will be at the discretion of the University and subject to availability and may be subject to pre-requisites, such as completion of another module. Although the University tries to ensure you are able to take the optional modules in which you have expressed interest this cannot be guaranteed.

Teaching and learning delivery

You will be taught primarily through a mixture of lectures, tutorials and seminars, depending on the modules you choose. Some modules may include group work.

The dissertation comprises a research proposal, conference presentation and piece of independent research, directed through dissertation workshops, plus a series of one-to-one tutorials with your supervisor.

Elements of your programme will be delivered via digital technology.

The scheduled teaching and learning activity hours and amount of technology enhanced learning activity for your programme will depend upon your module combination. In addition, you will undertake some self-scheduled teaching and learning activities, designed by and/or involving staff, which give some flexibility for you to choose when to complete

them. You will also be expected to undertake guided independent study. Information about module study hours including contact hours and the amount of independent study which a student is normally expected to undertake for a module is indicated in the relevant module description.

Accreditation details

N/A

Assessment

The MA in Archaeology is assessed entirely by coursework and some oral presentations, unless students are taking a language module as that will involve formal oral and written examination as appropriate.

Progression

Part-time and modular progression requirements

N/A

The University's taught postgraduate marks classification is as follows:

Mark Interpretation

70 - 100% Distinction

60 - 69% Merit

50 - 59% Good standard (Pass)

Failing categories:

40 - 49% Work below threshold standard

0 - 39% Unsatisfactory Work

For Master's Degree

The following conditions must be satisfied for the award of a Master's degree:

Award of a Master's degree

- i. an overall weighted average of 50% or more over 180 credits
- ii. a mark of 50% or more in at least 120 credits
- iii. no credits with a mark below 40%

In addition to the threshold conditions for the award of a Master's degree, the following further conditions must be satisfied for a classification of Distinction or Merit:

Distinction

An overall weighted average of 70% or more over 180 credits

OR

an overall weighted average of 68% or more over 180 credits and marks of 70% in at least 90 credits

AND

Where the dissertation is included in the conditions for the award of a Master's degree, a mark of at least 60% in the dissertation

AND

No marks below 40%.

Merit

An overall weighted average of 60% or more over 180 credits

OR

an overall average of 58% or more over 180 credits and marks of 60% in at least 90 credits

AND

No marks below 40%.

For Postgraduate Diploma

The following conditions must be satisfied for the award of a Postgraduate Diploma:

Award of a Postgraduate Diploma

- i. an overall weighted average of 50% or more over 120 credits
- ii. a mark of 50% or more in at least 80 credits
- iii. no credits with a mark below 40%

In addition to the threshold conditions for the award of a Postgraduate Diploma, the following further conditions must be satisfied for a classification of Distinction or Merit:

Distinction

An overall weighted average of 70% or more over 120 credits

OR

an overall weighted average of 68% or more over 120 credits and marks of 70% in at least 60 credits

AND

No marks below 40%.

Merit

An overall weighted average of 60% or more over 120 credits

OR

an overall average of 58% or more over 120 credits and marks of 60% in at least 60 credits

AND

No marks below 40%.

For Postgraduate Certificate

The following conditions must be satisfied for the award of a Postgraduate Certificate:

Award of a Postgraduate Certificate

- i. an overall weighted average of 50% or more over 60 credits
- ii. No credits with a mark below 40%.

Details of the classification method is given in detail in the [Assessment Handbook](#) under:

- Section 19: Awards: Postgraduate Master's, Postgraduate Diploma, Postgraduate Certificate

Please note that there may be a specific version for your year of entry.

Additional costs of the programme

No additional costs are required, but students may incur some additional through - e.g. textbook purchases, fieldtrips, travel costs to placements or dissertation research areas, and exceptional equipment.

Costs are indicative and may vary according to optional modules chosen and are subject to inflation and other price fluctuations. Estimates were calculated in 2026.

Students may consider purchasing a laptop to help support their learning. Information on recommended device specifications can be found on the [DTS Student Hub](#).

For further information about your Programme please refer to the Programme Handbook and the relevant module descriptions, which are available at <http://www.reading.ac.uk/module/>. The Programme Handbook and the relevant module descriptions do not form part of your Terms and Conditions with the University of Reading.

MA Archaeology (full-time) for students entering in session 2027/28

28 July 2026

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