

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

Name, title and level of final qualification(s)	MA Archaeology and Heritage (Level 7)
Name and title of any exit qualification(s)	PG Dip, PG Cert
Awarding Body	University of London
Teaching Institution(s)	Birkbeck, University of London
Home school/other teaching departments	School of Historical Studies
Location of delivery	Central London
Language of delivery and assessment	English
Mode of study, length of study and normal start month	Full-time (1 year) Part-time (2 years) September
Professional, statutory or regulatory body	N/A
QAA subject benchmark group(s) Higher Education Credit Framework for England	N/A
Birkbeck Course Code	TMAARHER_C
HECoS Code	100299
Start date of programme	Autumn 2012
Date of programme approval	Summer 2012
Date of last programme amendment approval	February 2024
Valid for academic entry year	2025-26
Date of last revision to document	06/02/24

Admissions requirements

We welcome applicants with a wide range of previous experience and qualifications. A second class honours degree (2.2 or above) in a Humanities subject satisfies the standard requirement, but we do base decisions on our own assessment of qualifications, knowledge and previous work experience. We may request writing samples or further interview to gauge academic potential in instances where non-traditional education and experience may merit the waiving of formal entry requirements.

Course aims

Archaeology and heritage, both as practices and intellectual fields of enquiry, are products of their social, political and historical contexts. As such, the study of archaeology and heritage is as much about the present and the future as it is about the past. Birkbeck's *MA Archaeology and Heritage* offers postgraduate training that is grounded in global case studies, rigorous methodologies, and interdisciplinary theories. Delivered by leading researchers in archaeology and heritage, the MA provides research-led teaching drawing directly on ethical and inclusive research and work practices in archaeology and heritage studies.

The *MA Archaeology and Heritage* begins by exploring the key concepts and methods in the field, in the compulsory module *Critical Approaches to Archaeology and Heritage*. Students then select from a variety of option modules, allowing them to draw on a broad variety of research conducted by scholars in the School of Historical Studies, including modules from the ancient to the contemporary, and which step from Europe to Asia and beyond.

Based in Bloomsbury, the programme takes advantage of Birkbeck's London home. Opportunities include an archaeological fieldschool on the Thames foreshore, with Museum of London Archaeology, and the potential of a supervised work placement in a museum. Students will develop the research skills and knowledge needed to research, design and write a dissertation on a specialist subject, under the supervision of one of our academic experts, in order to best prepare them for the next step in their academic career, or a profession in the heritage sector and beyond.

Our programme will introduce you to critical approaches in archaeology and heritage studies by addressing the perceived divide between theory and practice in archaeological fieldwork and cultural resource management. It aims to produce a new kind of professional: one who is not only theoretically aware, but also grounded in the craft of archaeology and heritage. In doing so, the course will also develop your capacity for interdisciplinary, innovative research, that challenges conventional understandings of the past, and the use of the past in the present. Based on the critical, integrated study of landscape, architecture and material culture, and their relationship with communities and the environment, this MA will equip you with multi-source knowledge and experience. Context, and an engagement with its material and historical conditions, is crucial to this training.

This course is ideal for anybody fascinated by archaeology or heritage and people's engagement with their past. It will develop your knowledge, experience, and professional networks in the heritage sector, and will help you prepare for a career in archaeology, museology, education, or heritage management.

Compulsory/Core modules

- Critical Approaches to Archaeology and Heritage
- Research Dissertation (Core)

Indicative options (note: not all options are available in any year)

- SSHC255S7 Frameworks for Archaeology: Curatorial Archaeology in England

- SSHC513S7 The Politics of the Past: Heritage in a changing World
- SSHC568S7 The World of Rome in the Museums of London
- SSHC475S7 The Archaeology of Roman Slavery
- SSHC477S7 The Silk Road: Imagining Global Cultures from the Middle Ages to UNESCO
- SSHC488S7 Imagined Landscapes of the Middle Ages
- SSHC353S7 Material Worlds
- SSHC545S7 Thames through Time: Birkbeck/MOLA Field School
- ARVC054S7 Museum and Heritage Work Placement
- SSHC552S7 Digging for China: A Political, Cultural and Social History of Chinese Archaeology

Course structure

Level	Module Code	Module Title	Credit	Comp Core/ Option	Likely teaching term(s)
Full-time – 1 year					
7	SSHC358S7	Critical Approaches to Archaeology and Heritage	30	Compulsory	T1
7		Option 1	30	Option	T2, 3
7		Option 2	30	Option	T2, 3
7		Option 3	30	Option	T2, 3
7	SSHC027D7	Research Dissertation	60	Core	T2-3
Part-time – 2 years					
Year 1					
7	SSHC358S7	Critical Approaches to Archaeology and Heritage	30	Compulsory	T1
7		Option 1	30	Option	T2, 3
7		Option 2	30	Option	T2, 3
Year 2					
7		Option 3	30	Option	T2, 3
7	SSHC027D7	Research Dissertation	60	Core	T2-3

T1=Autumn term, T2=Spring term, T3=Summer term

Note: a list of indicative options is shown above

- Core: Module must be taken and passed by student
- Compulsory: Module must be taken but can be considered for compensated credit (see CAS regulations paragraph 24)
- Option: Student can choose to take this module

How you will learn

Your learning and teaching is organised to help you meet the learning outcomes (below) of the course. As a student, you are expected to be an active learner and to take responsibility for your learning, engaging with all the material and sessions arranged for you.

The *MA Archaeology and Heritage* is divided into modules. You will find information on the virtual learning site (Moodle, see Academic Support below) about each of your modules, what to expect, the work you need to prepare, links to reading lists, and information about how and when you will be assessed.

Teaching on this course includes lectures but is predominantly structured as seminars, or discussion-focused group sessions, as well as practical sessions in the field and in museums. In the introductory module 'Critical Approaches to Archaeology and Heritage', lectures from our internationally-recognised staff will introduce you to the key contemporary themes and concepts deployed in archaeology and heritage in order to develop a critical understanding of how contemporary archaeologists and heritage practitioners conduct research and communicate its results in texts, pictures and museum displays. Seminars in this and subsequent modules will train you in the construction of collaborative knowledge alongside the diverse community of your fellow students. You will also deepen your subject knowledge and sharpen your critical skills through extensive reading and other forms of independent learning. Modules across the programme develop critically informed, integrated study of landscape, architecture, and material culture; context, and engagement with its material and historical conditions, is crucial to such evidence-based training.

How we will assess you

Assessment is used to enhance your learning rather than simply to test it. Archaeology modules incorporate diverse forms of assessment, including shorter exercises such as source analyses, oral presentations, as well as longer research essays. The field school uses a portfolio based upon experience on site. In all modules, assignments grow in complexity across the term, offering the reassurance of guided progression towards the research essay. Tailored writing support is available within the department and at college level for students who might benefit from additional advice. To complete the degree, you will design, research, and write a dissertation.

Learning outcomes (what you can expect to achieve)

'Learning outcomes' indicate what you should be able to know or do at the end of your course. Providing them helps you to understand what your teachers will expect and also the learning requirements upon which you will be assessed.

At the end of this course, you should be able to:

- Demonstrate advanced awareness of contemporary archaeological practice
- Critically reflect on the role of heritage in today's society
- Be familiar with key ethical debates in archaeology and heritage studies
- Understand the methodologies used in the analysis and interpretation of data
- Use archaeological material remains to form interpretations about past societies
- Discuss texts, objects and diverse media with a group of your peers
- Present your own research and arguments orally
- Design your own research questions and programme of research
- Carry out research and writing at multiple scales: response essay, research essay, dissertation

Careers and further study

The MA Archaeology and Heritage prepares you for any role which benefits from skills in research, communication and engagement. Graduates of our programme not only work in archaeology, heritage, conservation and museums, but also across a wider range of professions and disciplines, including education, business, the arts, and policy and social research. Graduates interested in further study have gone on to complete research degrees (MPhil/PhD programmes).

Birkbeck's MA Archaeology and Heritage graduates will complete with a set of valuable attributes, for example:

- The ability to work as part of a team
- High-level oral and written communication skills in English
- Research skills
- Skills in evaluating and assessing types of information
- The ability to present yourself and an argument
- The ability to look beyond Eurocentric engagements with heritage values, practices, ethics and care, to include alternative understandings and experiences of the past
- Skills in critically engaging with a variety of sources, ranging from archaeological finds and archives to museum displays, landscapes and monuments

Birkbeck offers a range of careers support to its students. You can find out more [on the careers pages of our website](#).

Academic regulations and course management

Birkbeck's academic regulations are contained in its [Common Award Scheme Regulations](#) and Policies published by year of application on the Birkbeck website.

You will have access to a course handbook on Moodle and this will outline how your course is managed, including whom to contact if you have any questions about your module or course.

Support for your study

Your learning at Birkbeck is supported by your teaching team and other resources and people in the College there to help you with your study. Birkbeck uses a virtual learning environment called Moodle and each course has a dedicated Moodle page and there are further Moodle sites for each of your modules. This will include your course handbook.

Birkbeck will introduce you to the Library and IT support, how to access materials online, including using Moodle, and provide you with an orientation which includes an online Moodle module to guide you through all of the support available. You will also be allocated a personal tutor and provided with information about learning support offered within your School and by the College.

[Please check our website for more information about student support services.](#) This covers the whole of your time as a student with us including learning support and support for your wellbeing.

Quality and standards at Birkbeck

Birkbeck's courses are subject to our quality assurance procedures. This means that new courses must follow our design principles and meet the requirements of our academic regulations. Each new course or module is subject to a course approval process where the proposal is scrutinised by subject specialists, quality professionals and external representatives to ensure that it will offer an excellent student experience and meet the expectation of regulatory and other professional bodies.

You will be invited to participate in an online survey for each module you take. We take these surveys seriously and they are considered by the course team to develop both modules and the overall courses. Please take the time to complete any surveys you are sent as a student.

We conduct an annual process of reviewing our portfolio of courses which analyses student achievement, equality data and includes an action plan for each department to identify ongoing enhancements to our education, including changes made as a result of student feedback.

Our periodic review process is a regular check (usually every four years) on the courses by department with a specialist team including students.

Each course will have an external examiner associated with it who produces an annual report and any recommendations. Students can read the most recent external examiner reports on the course Moodle pages. Our courses are all subject to Birkbeck Baseline Standards for our Moodle module information. This supports the accessibility of our education including expectations of what information is provided online for students.

The information in this programme specification has been approved by the College's Academic Board and every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information it contains.

Programme specifications are reviewed periodically. If any changes are made to courses, including core and/or compulsory modules, the relevant department is required to provide a revised programme specification. Students will be notified of any changes via Moodle.

Further information about specifications and an archive of programme specifications for the College's courses is [available online](#).

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