MA Archaeology

Awarding Institution: The University of Reading
Teaching Institution: The University of Reading
Relevant QAA subject benchmarking group(s): Archaeology
Faculty of Science Programme length: 12 Months
For students entering in 2003 Date of specification: July 2003
Programme Director: Dr Wendy Matthews
Programme Adviser: Dr Janet DeLaine/Dr Sturt Manning
Board of Studies: MA in Archaeology
Accreditation: Not appropriate

Summary of programme aims
The programme aims to foster a systematic, advanced understanding of the human past through the study and interpretation of archaeological evidence, and an ability to engage in independent research. It is designed to allow students to develop their specific interests in the archaeology of prehistoric, protohistoric, Roman and medieval Europe and the Mediterranean region while gaining an ability to recognise current weaknesses in our understanding of the past, either due to lack of evidence, poor methodology or inappropriate theory, and to propose means by which such weaknesses can be rectified. It also aims to prepare students for doctoral study.

Transferable skills
In following this programme, students will have had the opportunity to develop their skills relating to oral and written communication, data collection and analysis, and information technology to a high level, providing the independent learning ability which is essential for future professional development. Students will also develop skills in the critical analysis of archaeological evidence, and be able to think comparatively and cross-culturally. They will be able to exercise their own initiative, and make decisions in complex situations.

Programme content
The profile which follows states which modules must be taken (the compulsory part) together with one or more lists of modules from which the student must make a selection (the option modules). Students must choose such additional modules as they wish, in consultation with their programme adviser, to make 180 credits. The number of credits for each module is shown after its title.

		Credits	*Level*
Students must take three 10-credit modules in Research Skills including *Research resources and skills* (30 credits overall), two specialist optional modules of 30 credits each, and write a dissertation (90 credits). Students who have not previously studied Archaeology are required to take *Archaeological Thought* as one of the research skills modules. A language module of 20 credits can be taken with the Institution-wide Language Programme in place of two of the research skills modules where appropriate.			
Compulsory modules			
ARMDIS	*Dissertation*	90	M

Research Skills

Compulsory module		10 credits	
ARMR1	*Research resources and skills*	10	M

Optional modules
(Not all optional modules will be available in any one year. The availability of all optional modules is subject to availability of staff and will require a minimum number of participants. Admission to optional modules will be at the discretion of the Programme Director).

TWO of:		20 credits	
ARMR2	*Archaeological Thought*	10	M
ARMR3	*Archaeological Graphics*	10	M
ARMS2	*Archaeological sediments and bioarchaeology*	10	M
ARMS3	*Soils and geoarchaeology*	10	M

Optional specialist modules
(Not all optional modules will be available in any one year. The availability of all optional modules is subject to availability of staff and will require a minimum number of participants. Admission to optional modules will be at the discretion of the Programme Director).

TWO of:			
ARMO1	*The Neanderthals*	30	M
ARMO2	*Social Life in the Prehistoric Mediterranean*	30	M
ARMO6	*The Age of Stonehenge in Britain*	30	M
ARMO7	*Environmental Archaeology and the cultural landscapes of prehistory*	30	M
ARMO8	*North West Europe 100BC to AD 200*	30	M
ARMO11	*The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England*	30	M
ARMO12	*Emergence of Civilisation in Mesopotamia*	30	M

Summary of teaching and assessment
The MA in Archaeology is assessed entirely by coursework, unless students are taking a language module as part of Research Skills which will involve formal oral and written examination as appropriate. Basic research methods is taught through a series of workshops and seminars, and is assessed by written critique, essay and ICT-related tasks. The remaining technical skills options are taught through practical classes and assessed by written reports and/or portfolio. The specific teaching and learning methods vary between specialist optional modules, but all are based on a mixture of lectures, workshops, seminars and tutorials, and each module is assessed by a major essay and by a variety of other types of coursework, including oral presentation, critical review, and short report. The dissertation comprises a piece of independent research, directed through dissertation workshops plus a series of one-to-one tutorials, and assessed by coursework and an oral presentation.

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 the MA Archaeology Degree
To pass the MA Archaeology students must gain an average mark of 50 or more overall including a mark of 50 or more for the dissertation. In addition the total credit value of all modules marked below 40 must not exceed 30 credits and for all modules marked below 50 must be less than 60 credits.

Students who gain an average mark of 70 or more overall including a mark of 70 or more for the dissertation and have no mark below 40 will be eligible for a Distinction. Those gaining an average mark of 60 or more overall including a mark of 60 or more for the dissertation and have no mark below 40 will be awarded eligible for a Merit.

For the PG Diploma
To pass the Postgraduate Diploma students must gain an average mark of 50 or more. In addition the total credit value of all modules marked below 40 must not exceed 30 credits and for all modules marked below 50 must be less than 60 credits.

Students who gain an average mark of 70 or more and have no mark below 40 will be eligible for the award of a Distinction. Those gaining an average mark of 60 or more and have no mark below 40 will be awarded eligible for a Merit.

For the PG Certificate
To pass the Postgraduate Certificate students must gain an average mark of 50 or more. In addition the total credit value of all modules marked below 40 must not exceed 10 credits.

Part-time/Modular arrangements
The programme may be undertaken over two years on a part-time basis. Selection of modules between the two years will be agreed between the student and the Board of Studies at the commencement of the programme. *Research resources and skills* is taken in the first term of the programme, and the *Dissertation* in the second year. It is anticipated that students will normally complete at least 80 credits' worth of modules in Year 1. Modules will be assessed in the year that they are taken. The programme may also be taken on a modular basis, with *Research resources and skills* being taken in the first term and the *Dissertation* being taken in the final year.

Admission requirements
For acceptance onto the course, a student must already possess a good degree from a U.K. University (normally at least a 2.1 standard) or have equivalent qualifications from elsewhere.

Support for students and their learning
University support for students and their learning falls into two categories. Learning support includes IT Services, which has several hundred computers and the University Library, which across its three sites holds over a million volumes, subscribes to around 4,000 current periodicals, has a range of electronic sources of information and houses the Student Access to Independent Learning (S@IL) computer-based teaching and learning facilities. There are language laboratory facilities for those students taking modules offered by the Institution-wide Language Programme. Student guidance and welfare support is provided by the Careers Advisory Service, the University's Special Needs Advisor, Study Advisors, Hall Wardens and the Students' Union.

The Departmental Handbook issued to MA Archaeology students provides extensive information on resources and study skills. The Department occupies a purpose-built structure with further shared facilities providing a research laboratory, teaching laboratories, computer

laboratories, and space for postgraduates to work in the Department. There are also traditional and digital drawing office facilities; geophysical and tacheometric survey equipment; excavation equipment; soil and sediment coring equipment; audio-visual resources; and a minibus. The University Library is well stocked with works relating to many different aspects of archaeology.

Career prospects

The Masters in Archaeology at Reading is both a route into archaeology (including field archaeology, museums and heritage management), and an excellent foundation for students wishing to pursue further research at higher degree level. It also forms the basis for other careers in the areas of the arts, media, management, administration, the civil service, local government, commerce, law, publishing, librarianship and teaching. A significant number of graduates have found positions in UK and European archaeology, either directly from their Masters degree, or following further postgraduate study.

Educational aims of the programme

The MA in Archaeology aims to foster an advanced understanding of the human past through study and interpretation of archaeological evidence, and an ability to engage in independent research. On successful completion of the programme students will have acquired: an extended range, depth and sophistication of knowledge regarding selected aspects of archaeology which reflect their specifics interests, through a progression from taught units to dissertation research; abilities to synthesise and evaluate critically archaeological evidence and proposed interpretations; skills for independent research appropriate for Masters dissertations and as preparation for doctoral study; and an ability to recognise current weaknesses in our understanding of the past, either due to lack of evidence, poor methodology or inappropriate theory, and to propose means by which such weaknesses can be rectified.

Programme Outcomes

The programme provides opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate knowledge and understanding, skills, qualities and other attributes in the following areas:

Knowledge and Understanding

A. Knowledge and understanding:	**Teaching/learning methods and strategies**
1. A comprehensive, systematic, and up-to-date knowledge of : a. selected aspects of human societies from our earliest ancestors to the medieval period, particularly in Europe and the Mediterranean b. the diverse sources of evidence used by archaeologists, their variability and reliability; 2. A critical awareness of a wide range of: a. past and current methods by which archaeologists acquire, date and analyse their primary evidence b. interpretative approaches applied to archaeological evidence in their historical, political and social context, including the most recent approaches; 3. A comprehensive understanding of a range of technical skills and/or methodologies, applicable to their specific research projects.	All areas are taught primarily through seminars and problem-oriented classwork, based on independent reading initially structured by bibliographies issued for each module. **Assessment** All knowledge and understanding is tested entirely by coursework, including the dissertation, with oral presentations making some contribution.

Skills and other attributes

B. Intellectual skills – Students will be able:

1. to integrate and synthesise large quantities of archaeological and other data from multiple and diverse sources both systematically and creatively;
2. to make sophisticated and informed judgements in the absence of complete data;
3. to recognise and evaluate critically past and current theoretical approaches and competing interpretations;
4. to formulate individual research questions at a sophisticated level and identify strategies for exploring them;
5. to think critically and independently, and to propose new hypotheses as appropriate;
6. to synthesise and articulate arguments effectively, and to communicate the conclusions clearly;
7. to develop a critical self-awareness as a working archaeologist

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

These skills are developed throughout the programme, culminating in the dissertation. All option modules deal with questions of evidence and interpretation, through seminars, essays, and other coursework which require analysis and debate of intellectual problems. Awareness of current approaches is encouraged as options are usually linked to lecturers' research interests. Independent research skills are developed through essays and the dissertation, including the formulation of topics and the identification of methodologies, for which initial preparation and regular support are provided. Individual feedback is provided on content and organisation of coursework, and a formal oral presentation is part of the dissertation.

Assessment

Intellectual skills are tested entirely by coursework, especially the dissertation, with oral presentations making some contribution.

C. Practical skills – students will be able :

1. to locate, extract and appraise critically archaeological information in published sources and on the WWW;
2. to acquire, select and apply appropriate technical skills for specific archaeological tasks and/or research projects;
3. to select and apply appropriate methodologies in assessing the meaning and significance of evidence or data
4. to plan and carry out a primary research project, working independently
5. to engage in group discussion and debate on archaeological issues

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

These skills are taught through the research methods modules and in dissertation workshops, and developed by application to the option modules and dissertation. Group discussion forms an essential part of most modules.

Assessment

Skills 1-4 are assessed indirectly through coursework and the dissertation. Technical and research skills are also assessed through classwork exercises and short reports.

D. Transferable skills – Students will be able: 1. to communicate complex data and ideas clearly and effectively in speech and in a variety of types of writing; 2. to deal effectively with a variety of numerical data and visual material, using the most appropriate and up-to-date techniques; 3. to demonstrate self direction and originality in devising strategies for solving problems, even in complex and unpredictable situations; 5. to continue to develop their knowledge, technical skills, and understanding to a high level; 6. to exercise their own initiative and personal responsibility	**Teaching/learning methods and strategies** All these skills are essential for the successful completion of the programme. Skill 1 is developed throughout the programme in the writing of essays, critiques, short reports, and the dissertation, and by participation in seminars and a formal dissertation presentation. Skills 2, 3 and 6 are developed through the major essays and dissertation, and supported by the research methods and dissertation workshops. Skill 5 is particularly developed through the research methods and technical skills modules. *Assessment* These skills are assessed throughout the programme by a combination of coursework, essays, oral presentations, and dissertation.

Please note: This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably expect to achieve and demonstrate if he/she takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. More detailed information on the learning outcomes, content and teaching, learning and assessment methods of each module can be found in module and programme handbooks.