

Programme Specification 2025-26

ARCHAEOLOGY TRIPOS

Awarding body	University of Cambridge
Teaching institution	Department of Archaeology
Accreditation details	None
Name of final award	Bachelor of Arts
Programme title	Archaeology Tripos
UCAS code	V400
JACS code(s)	V400, L600, Q400
Relevant QAA benchmark statement(s)	Archaeology; Anthropology
Qualifications framework level	6 (Honours)
Date specification produced	November 2024

The Archaeology Tripos draws on teaching in Archaeology, Biological Anthropology and the ancient languages and cultures of Egypt and Mesopotamia. The Tripos forms an intellectually coherent programme of study, within the Department of Archaeology, allowing students to pursue a course of study in the social and biological dimensions of the human past (and present).

Programme structure

The Tripos offers, over a three-year period, the opportunity to study the archaeology of a wide range of periods and geographical areas. The Tripos offers disciplinary depth within Archaeology, Assyriology, Biological Anthropology and Egyptology tracks, and interdisciplinary breadth through the joint-tracks in Assyriology and Egyptology and Biological Anthropology and Archaeology, and papers borrowed from other Triposes.

Students follow a multi-disciplinary first year, and in the second and third year progress through their chosen track.

Part I

Undergraduates on the Tripos study a multi-disciplinary first year, in which students explore different aspects of the human past and present through their choice of four of the offered introductory papers. Students have the option of borrowing an introductory paper from the

Psychological & Behavioural Sciences Tripos, or introductory papers in Politics, Social Anthropology or Sociology from the Human, Social and Political Sciences Tripos. The first year will introduce students to the subject options available to them in Part II, many of which they may not have had the opportunity to study previously.

Part II

In the second and third year of the Tripos, students must choose one of the specialist or joint tracks offered. These are:

Single-subject tracks

- Archaeology
- Assyriology
- Biological Anthropology
- Egyptology

Joint subject tracks

- Assyriology and Egyptology
- Biological Anthropology and Archaeology

Each of the subject tracks above is structured with clearly defined subject specialisation in the second year, with a selection of core papers in the subject and optional papers within the Archaeology Tripos or borrowed from other Triposes within the University. This allows students to gain specialist subject knowledge, complemented by interdisciplinary combinations that engage their specialist interests. In the third year, the disciplinary specialisation is continued and focuses on engaging students with current research and critical thinking in their chosen area.

Part IIA (Year 2) students choose four papers. Teaching on these papers takes place in Michaelmas and Lent terms. Language papers may have additional teaching in early Easter term.

Part IIB (Year 3) students on most tracks have a choice of year-long papers and one-term papers and a dissertation. The combination of papers must total the equivalent of four year-long papers.

Educational aims

The Tripos aims:

- to provide students with an excellent education in Archaeology, Biological Anthropology and/or Ancient Languages and Cultures of Egypt and Mesopotamia, as they relate to the four subjects offered within the Tripos;
- to provide an appropriate balance between disciplinary depth and subject specialisation, and interdisciplinary breadth;

- to maintain the highest academic standards through research-led teaching;
- to develop critical-thinking skills and an understanding of evidential basis and critical appraisal in all subjects;
- to provide an intellectually-stimulating environment in which students have the opportunity to develop their skills and interests to their full potential;
- to develop written and oral presentation skills, and to provide students with the opportunity to develop skills in research and use of research methods and resources, such as internet and database searches, field methods, and use of laboratory equipment as appropriate;
- to produce graduates with outstanding intellectual versatility, multicultural sensitivity, and international outlook highly valued by employers.

Learning outcomes

Knowledge and understanding

Part I

On completion of Part I, students will have obtained:

- a key understanding of basic concepts within the subject areas offered, in order to build a solid foundation for further study in the Tripos;
- an understanding of the diversity of intellectual skills that can be brought to bear on the study of archaeology, biological anthropology and the languages and cultures of ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia;
- an ability to read and assess a range of standard literatures, to develop their own arguments in response to those literatures, to express these arguments on paper and to defend them in discussion;
- a basic understanding of the methods used in research, analysis and fieldwork, as appropriate.

Part IIA

On completion of Part IIA, students will have obtained:

- knowledge at an intermediate level of their chosen track;
- a more detailed understanding of the theoretical background, history, and methodologies used in their chosen track.
- subject-specific skills, as outlined below.

Part IIB

On completion of Part IIB, students will have obtained:

- advanced knowledge of their chosen track;
- an understanding of contemporary research topics in their chosen tracks;

- if they have chosen to offer a dissertation, an ability to define a research subject and undertake independent investigation of it, using primary or secondary data as appropriate;
- a foundation for further self-directed and self-motivated study and analysis;
- Subject-specific skills, as outlined below.

Skills and other attributes

Archaeology track (including Assyriology and Egyptology)

The educational emphasis in the second year is upon archaeology as a discipline, and on the acquisition of specific expertise and skills within it, entailing theoretical, library-based, and practical elements.

On completion of Part IIA, students will have:

- become conversant with the history, theory and practice of archaeology, and aware of how changing theoretical positions have influenced the manner in which archaeological data is collected, analysed and interpreted (optional for Assyriology and Egyptology);
- begun to acquire critical, in-depth knowledge of selected sub-fields of archaeology;
- received specific training in archaeological fieldwork and in the practical aspects of the sub-fields of archaeology they have selected for intensive study;
- Summer experience in practical archaeology in the field (alternative study experience available for Assyriology and Egyptology);
- the use of statistics and computing as applied to archaeological data-sets (optional for Assyriology and Egyptology);
- for students of Egyptology and Assyriology, advanced their knowledge of the language(s) and literature.

The educational emphasis of the final year is upon consolidating and adding further depth to knowledge and understanding, and opening the way to self-directed and self-motivated study and analysis. The latter are mostly developed through special topics papers, individual practical projects and/or the dissertation research and presentation.

On completion of Part IIB, students will have:

- consolidated their understanding of the history, theory and practice of archaeology, and placed it in the context of a wider awareness of archaeology of different regions of the world (optional for Assyriology and Egyptology);
- expanded their knowledge and critical in-depth understanding of their selected sub-fields of archaeology;
- had the option of completing a largely self-motivated study of an archaeological problem, either through intensive library work and/or as a hands-on project;
- for students on the Egyptology or Assyriology option, reached a level of language competence enabling them to consider starting text-based research on linguistic or cultural topics.

Biological Anthropology track

On completion of Part IIA, students will have:

- a detailed understanding of human evolution, growth and development, adaptation and related topics in biological anthropology;
- a detailed understanding of evolutionary and other biological processes relevant to biological anthropology;
- a strong perspective of how evolutionary and biological approaches fit into the broader field of archaeology and anthropology;
- the capacity to understand and use appropriate statistical tests;
- the ability to write focused and detailed assessed essays and to think critically about research questions in the field of biological anthropology.

On completion of Part IIB, students will have:

- advanced their detailed knowledge of human biology, behaviour and evolution;
- understood the genetic and behavioural bases for evolutionary patterns, human variation and human adaptations;
- enhanced their skills in written presentation, independent research work, laboratory practices, computing use and quantitative and analytical methods;
- presented independent research work through extended essays or dissertation;
- the capacity to manipulate data and carry out analyses via the practical and project work;
- gained the skills in critique, synthesis and original thought necessary for the examination papers.

Students on any joint track will obtain the same knowledge and skills, with a narrower focus, as students on the single-subject tracks above.

Teaching methods

Teaching is provided in the form of lectures, practical classes and seminars. This will vary by subject and paper choice. Students on certain tracks will receive direction in archaeological fieldwork and recording methods through involvement on training excavations and field trips

Teaching is also provided by the Colleges in the form of supervisions, which give students individual and small-group teaching related to the papers studied through written work and feedback thereon. Supervisions also require students to develop oral skills in analysis, presentation, argumentation and discussion. Students are encouraged throughout the Tripos to undertake independent reading and study to back up and consolidate what is being taught. Learning skills will be developed throughout the Tripos through personal study, participation in lectures, practical classes and seminars, and essay writing in supervisions.

Most subjects in the Tripos host weekly or fortnightly optional seminar groups to provide students with the opportunity to acquire supplementary learning through interaction with graduate students, staff, and members of the wider University.

Students' educational progress is monitored continually through feedback of supervision essays, supervision discussions, and, where applicable, participation in practical classes or fieldwork.

Students on the Part IIA Archaeology, Assyriology and Egyptology tracks or Part IIA Assyriology & Egyptology or Biological Anthropology & Archaeology joint-tracks undertake at least one week of study visit and four weeks of excavation or other fieldwork on an approved project in order to proceed to Part IIB.

Assessment methods

Part I

Assessment in Part I will take place through a variety of means, including unseen closed-book examinations. Some papers have mandatory coursework elements, such as practical or laboratory write-ups or fieldwork reports, which form part of the overall assessment of the paper. Other papers are assessed by in-house tests.

Part IIA and Part IIB

Assessment in Part II may vary based on the subject track chosen. Papers may be assessed by a combination of an unseen closed-book examination and coursework. Coursework can have a variety of formats: assessed essays, object studies, multi-media projects and fieldwork or practical reports. All Part IIB students in Archaeology, Egyptology, Biological Anthropology, and Biological Anthropology & Archaeology will offer a 10,000-word dissertation on a topic of their choice, approved by the Head of Department. Part IIB students in Assyriology or Assyriology & Egyptology will have the choice to submit a 10,000-word dissertation, in lieu of a standard paper.

Students are permitted to borrow specified papers from other Triposes. In this case students will be assessed according to the requirements for the hosting Tripos. Comparability in assessment for borrowed papers is assured by the Chair of Examinations and by the Faculty Board.

Entry and/or progression requirements

Admission to the Archaeology Tripos through the Colleges is based on high achievement at A Level or equivalent examinations, school recommendations, and success at interview. The Tripos requires all applicants to achieve a minimum of A*AA or 40-42 in the IB or equivalent. Interview and testing requirements will vary by College.

To remain at Cambridge, students must normally achieve at least a Third Class Honours standard each year.

Student support

Students are supported at the College level by a Director of Studies, who oversees progress throughout their studies. Colleges also have a robust system of tutorial support, which provides pastoral care for students. At the Department level, the Tripos has a Management Committee which is responsible for general oversight of the degree. The Director of Teaching and Learning oversees all aspects of teaching within the Tripos. Each paper is run by a Paper Co-ordinator who organises lists of appropriate supervisors, suggested reading, essay topics and sets the assessment.

Management of teaching quality and standards

The University ensures high standards of teaching and learning in the following ways:

- The completion of Annual Quality Updates by each Faculty and Department, to enable central overview of provision and assist in dissemination of good practice
- Scrutiny of the reports of External Examiners for all teaching programmes
- Encouraging student engagement at both the local level, through involvement in Faculty and Departmental Committees, and at a central level by participation in nationally-benchmarked surveys
- Holding reflective, centrally-coordinated, Learning and Teaching Reviews for all teaching institutions every six years to explore provision and suggest constructive courses of action
- Mentoring, appraisal, and peer review of staff, and encouraging staff participation in personal development programmes

Graduate employability and career destinations

Preparation for employment in general is provided in the opportunities for the acquisition of relevant transferable skills outlined in this programme specification. Where programmes with a significant vocational or professional element are accredited by Professional, Regulatory or Statutory Bodies details are given above.

The Archaeology Tripos is a CfA accredited degree programme. Student membership of CfA ([Chartered Institute for Archaeologists](#)) is offered to all students enrolled on an accredited programme.

The Careers Service maintains links with employers and takes their needs and opinions into account in the services which it provides for students. The Careers Service also allocates a Careers Adviser to each College, faculty and department to act as a point of contact.

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information in this programme specification. At the time of publication, the programme specification has been approved by the relevant Faculty Board (or equivalent). Programme specifications are reviewed annually, however, during the course of the academical year, any approved changes to the programme will be communicated to enrolled students through email notification or publication in the *Reporter*. The relevant faculty or department will endeavour to update the programme specification accordingly, and prior to the start of the next academical year.

Further information about specifications and an archive of programme specifications for all awards of the University is available online at: <https://www.camdata.admin.cam.ac.uk/>.