

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

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| 1 | Awarding Institution | Newcastle University |
| 2 | Teaching Institution | Newcastle University |
| 3 | Final Award | MA |
| 4 | Programme Title | MA Archaeology MA Archaeology - Prehistoric Archaeology MA Archaeology - Classical Archaeology: Greek and Roman MA Archaeology - Roman Frontier Studies MA Archaeology - Late Antique, Medieval and Byzantine Archaeology MA Archaeology - Historical Archaeology MA Archaeology – Archaeology, Artefacts and Technologies |
| 5 | Programme Code | 4089 F/P 4160 F/P 4165F/P 4100F/P 4164F/P 4166F/P 4167F/P |
| 6 | Programme Accreditation | N/A |
| 7 | QAA Subject Benchmark(s) | N/A |
| 8 | FHEQ Level | Level 7 |
| 9 | Date written/revised | May 2026 |

10 Programme Aims

1. To provide students with a range of learning opportunities (in relation to analytical, key, research and subject-specific skills) within the field of Archaeology.
2. To provide a curriculum that is responsive to both the research preparation and professional preparation funding schemes of the AHRC.
3. To enable students to develop their capacity to learn in preparation for or as part of continuing professional development (CPD) and lifelong learning.
4. To provide access to Higher Education to students from a variety of educational backgrounds, and to provide a bridge to further postgraduate qualifications.
5. To provide students with the opportunity to gain the basic skills and knowledge required to continue with academic research in Archaeology at PhD level, or to enter the workplace in one of a variety of professions requiring higher levels of skills such as literacy, research and project management.
6. To expose students to cutting-edge research environments in the sphere of Archaeology and encourage engagement by students with current staff research.
7. That the programme meets the requirements of a level 7 qualification as defined by the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.
8. That the programme conforms to University policies and to QAA codes of practice.
9. If desired, to enable students to develop skills and knowledge in a particular area of Archaeology through taking one of the specialised routes specified in the Degree Programme Regulations.

11 Learning Outcomes

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

Knowledge and Understanding

On completing the programme students should have a critical knowledge and understanding of:

- A1 Archaeology from a variety of chronological and thematic perspectives or from a particular named route
- A2 The theoretical and interpretive perspectives of archaeologists
- A3 The methodologies and sources available to archaeologists
- A4 The detailed knowledge and analytical skills which come from undertaking a sustained original piece of research in archaeology (a dissertation).

Teaching and Learning Methods

The primary method of imparting knowledge and understanding [A1-A4] is seminars, supplemented by lectures (for systematic and advanced overviews of module subjects), practicals, individual tutorials for the return of coursework, and self-directed learning (to facilitate the development of a comprehensive understanding and critical awareness of current research and advanced scholarship).

The structure of the MA is designed so that all students gain an advanced critical understanding and knowledge together with a range of key theoretical, analytical and methodological frameworks, through **period-based or thematic optional Graduate Seminars** [A1-3]. Further 20-credit **optional modules** in archaeology provide knowledge of specific chronological/thematic areas [A1-3] which will offer excellent preparation for further research or professional practice depending on module choice.

Students may choose to graduate with a degree in one of our named pathway routes. To do this, they must take at least 60 credits of optional modules plus their dissertation from a named route as outlined in the Degree Programme Regulations.

The Newcastle MA in Archaeology also provides the opportunity to acquire a range of **advanced practical skills**. Optional modules in artefact analysis, GIS (Geographical Information Systems) or other IT applications, archaeological fieldwork techniques, heritage management, and ancient or modern languages will provide high-level practical and/or analytical skills. Teaching for this Master's degree in these specialised areas is delivered by world-class specialists based in the School of History, Classics and Archaeology, the School of Arts and Cultures, and the Great North Museum. Students acquire advanced knowledge and understanding of a range of high-level transferable skills. In addition, students are strongly encouraged to apply these practical skills and knowledge to their other archaeology modules [A3].

Research training to prepare them for their dissertations with take place within ARA8099 [A4]. This course will also provide students with key academic skills and prepare them for future careers. Through the dissertation, students demonstrate the theoretical and methodological knowledge acquired during the course and achieve a detailed knowledge of a specific area by undertaking a sustained original piece of research in archaeology [A4].

Throughout the programme students are encouraged to read widely and extensive bibliographies are supplied. Students make use of a wide range of learning resources, including not only books and journal articles in the Robinson Library and Cowen (Archaeology) Library in the Great North Museum, but also primary sources (e.g. Robinson Library Special Collections, Tyne and Wear Record Office, Tyne and Wear Sites and Monuments Record, Northumberland Record Office, Durham University Library), artefacts in the collections of the Great North Museum, the Wolfson Lab, and other museums, and

on-line resources and databases available via the Robinson Library (e.g. Edina/Digimap Modern and Historic Map Collections, JSTOR, Archaeology Data Service, Portable Antiquities Database).

Assessment Strategy

Knowledge and understanding [A1] are assessed through written essays, research assignments or examinations for each module, and through the final dissertation [A4]. Written assignments for compulsory and optional modules are designed to provide students with the opportunity to explore the theoretical and interpretive perspectives of archaeologists [A2]. In the assessments for some modules, students will present formative essays and/or presentations on aspects of archaeology, on which they will receive written and/or oral feedback as appropriate. Some modules will include written examinations to evaluate knowledge and understanding. Marks will be awarded for evidence of knowledge attained, as well as evidence that the student has achieved an appropriate level of understanding of the methodologies and sources used by specialists in this field [A2-3]. The dissertation provides an extended opportunity for students to reveal their in-depth knowledge and understanding of a particular aspect of archaeology, and they will be encouraged to apply the practical skills they have acquired to their research [A4].

Intellectual Skills

On completing the programme students should have acquired advanced skills in:

- B1 Critical reasoning
- B2 Gathering and using information
- B3 Applying concepts
- B4 Evaluation, analysis, and interpretation

Teaching and Learning Methods

Through seminar presentations and discussion, practical work and lectures students will develop the ability to think critically and to apply advanced knowledge and methodological skills they have acquired through their studies to present balanced and coherent arguments [B1]. For example, students will have the opportunity to develop and practise advanced skills in data gathering and manipulation through seminars and practical work, and the ability to critically identify, select and apply relevant data and concepts to questions using relevant methodologies [B2, 3]. Seminar teaching through presentations and discussion will allow students to develop advanced critical skills in evaluating, analysing and interpreting data [B4].

Assessment Strategy

Assessment of knowledge and understanding is by use of coursework (including essays, laboratory or case-study reports, in-course tests, research project work and dissertation, oral and poster presentations), for some modules in combination with written examinations (including essay questions, short answer and problem-solving as appropriate to the module). The mix of coursework and examination varies as appropriate to the module but most modules include some aspect of formative assessment during the module in addition to the summative assessment.

All pieces of written work in the taught modules require students to gather, evaluate, analyse, and interpret evidence, using the skills identified as benchmark skills within the discipline of Archaeology [B1-4]. The dissertation allows students to demonstrate the range of skills they have acquired in relation to a specific piece of archaeological research.

Practical Skills

On completing the programme students should have:

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| C1 | Acquired subject-specific skills through training and research experience and developed an ability to evaluate, analyse and interpret different sources of evidence relating to Archaeology or a specific area within archaeology provided by a programme route; |
| C2 | Developed the ability to undertake higher degree research through completion of short pieces of written work and a dissertation; |
| C3 | Practised a range of subject-specific skills such as presenting a balanced written argument based on a range of evidence, critical analysis of archaeological reports, and integration of data from a range of sources using appropriate methodologies; |
| C4 | Developed a variety of advanced additional skills according to their individual needs, in e.g. artefact analysis, GIS, database skills, archive use, data management. |

Teaching and Learning Methods

All taught modules include seminars, lectures or practicals delivered by professional archaeologists and practitioners who research and work in the subjects on which they lecture. These will provide an advanced survey of the state of knowledge and enable students to develop a comprehensive understanding and critical awareness of specific topics relating to current research and advanced scholarship. All contributors use a wide range of examples from their own fields of expertise.

Group work and practical sessions related to lectures provides students with the opportunity to develop and practise their subject specific and generic skills [C1-4] through, for example, preparation for and oral contribution to seminars, artefact or GIS practicals.

The range of postgraduate modules on offer is a great strength of this course. It will allow students with different backgrounds to develop advanced skills appropriate to their archaeological research interests. The programme includes certain optional modules which are co-taught with undergraduates (for whom they are UG Stage 3 special subjects). The MA versions of these modules include assessment at Level 7 and meet the assessment criteria at an MA level. They offer MA students who have not benefited from these research-led modules as undergraduates at Newcastle, the opportunity to take them as part of their MA. Thus all modules provide an advanced level of knowledge and understanding, but selected options give students with particularly strong backgrounds in a particular area the opportunity to develop aspects of their knowledge, for example in a thematic area, or in practical skills like artefact analysis or applications for GIS.

Research training, tutorials, guided reading, feedback on outline proposals, and continuous supervision provide the basis for students to complete their dissertations.

Assessment Strategy

All assignments include an element of assessment related to the understanding of subject-specific skills [C1].
The dissertation represents the summative task in detailed practice of all these cognitive skills.

Transferable/Key Skills

- On completing the programme students should demonstrate advanced skills in:
- D1 Written communication
 - D2 Interpersonal/oral communication
 - D3 Teamwork
 - D4 Planning and organisation
 - D5 Computer literacy

Teaching and Learning Methods

Through lectures, seminars, practicals and tutorials, students will acquire advanced skills in:

[a] how to plan and execute both short and extended pieces of written work [D1, 4, 5].

[b] effective interpersonal/oral communication techniques - Students practise and develop these skills by contributing orally either as groups or individually in seminars for taught modules [D2, 3-4].

[c] teamworking - This is practised through contribution to group seminar work [D3], and (optionally) through participation in archaeological fieldwork.

[d] planning and organization. Students practice and develop planning skills, which are introduced during Induction Week, by organizing their work schedules around programme deadlines, including the dissertation [D4-5].

[e] computer literacy - This is practiced and developed throughout the programme through submission of coursework, practical work, the dissertation [D5], and (optionally) through advanced computing-based skills modules.

Assessment Strategy

Written communication [D1] is assessed in each of the modules on this programme. Assignments will be mostly essay-based, reflecting the dominance of this form of writing within the discipline, but other written work may be set, such as writing a research log, a research report, or compiling a database or implementing a GIS as part of a research assignment.

Interpersonal/oral communication, individually and as part of a team [D2-3] is a critical part of the teaching and learning experience for this programme, e.g. during group seminars during and individual feedback sessions.

Planning and organization is practised throughout the programme through the student's ability to meet deadlines and successfully complete the programme [D4].

Computer literacy [D5] is assessed through written assignments, which are all required to be word-processed. Where appropriate, students may wish to acquire higher computing skills (e.g. in databases or GIS), and training in these areas is available through optional modules.

12 Programme Curriculum, Structure and Features

Basic structure of the programme

One year full time or two years part time.

180 credits (120 coursework, 60 dissertation) unless 40 credits below Level 7 are taken in which case 190 credits are taken.

80 credits compulsory (2 x 10-credit module and 1 x 60-credit dissertation)

100 optional credits

For Programme Routes: Candidates wishing to follow one of the routes shall take a minimum of 60 and a maximum of 100 credits from the modules specified for each route.

Key features of the programme (including what makes the programme distinctive)

The Newcastle MA in Archaeology offers the opportunity to pursue advanced study and research in the **thematic areas** of prehistoric, classical, medieval and/or historical archaeology and practical skills-based training. This can be taken under the title MA Archaeology or candidates may opt for a specific named route from the following choices: Prehistoric Archaeology; Classical Archaeology: Greek and Roman; Roman Frontier Studies; Late Antique, Medieval and Byzantine Archaeology; Historical Archaeology and Archaeology, Artefacts and Technologies. The considerable range of options and named routes allow students to shape their course flexibly to suit their interests and career aspirations. The programme also provides a portal for students from other, related disciplines to begin studying archaeology at an advanced level.

The Newcastle MA in Archaeology also provides the opportunity to acquire a range of **advanced practical skills**. Optional modules in artefact analysis, GIS and other IT

applications, archaeological fieldwork techniques, heritage management, and ancient or modern languages provide high-level practical and/or analytical skills relevant to careers in both further research and professional practice.

Programme regulations (link to on-line version)

[Programme Regulations 2026-27](#)

13 Support for Student Learning

Generic information regarding University provision is available [here](#).

Resources specifically supporting learning in Archaeology

Students have access to the Wolfson Laboratory, which specialises in material culture analysis, populated with a suite of reference collections (e.g. animal bone; ceramic) and specialist equipment including high spec microscopy. Health and safety training is provided in advance of lab use, and specialist equipment use is supported by training and supervision.

Students also have access to the extensive artefact collections of the Great North Museum (the premier museum for the north-east of England and the 'gateway' to the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site). Information on these and other local resources is listed on the School web-site (<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/historical/>) and on individual staff websites.

14 Methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of teaching and learning

Generic information regarding University provision is available [here](#).

15 Regulation of assessment

Generic information regarding University provision is available [here](#).

In addition, information relating to the programme is provided in:

The University Prospectus: <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/undergraduate/degrees/#subject>

Degree Programme and University Regulations: <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/regulations/>

Please note. This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and of the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve if she/he takes full advantage of the learning opportunities provided.