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News

Studying at the Institute of Archaeology

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Introduction

The eight floors of the Institute occupy the northern side of Gordon Square, next to the main UCL campus, within easy reach of the museums, cultural life and resources that lie at the heart of London. The building is home to a large community of academic and professional support staff, undergraduate, masters and PhD students and is a global hub for the discipline of archaeology, building on foundations laid in 1937 when the Institute first opened its doors thanks to the intellectual and organisational vision of Sir Mortimer Wheeler and Tessa Verney Wheeler. Besides our staff and students, the Institute hosts an impressive range of academic activities and welcomes a continual flow of visitors from around the world. All of this contributes to a unique environment in which to study the past, whether your interests are regional, chronological, methodological or topical, or combine several or all of these areas of archaeology.

On the fifth floor of the building can be found the world-renowned UCL Institute of Archaeology library, a home for thousands of books and many other, often unique, resources for the study of archaeology, which reflect our long history as a global leader in the field. The Institute's outstanding archaeological library is complemented by UCL's Main Library, University of London Senate House Library and many other specialist libraries in the vicinity.

We are one of the most highly regarded centres for archaeology, cultural heritage and museum studies in Britain, with large teaching and reference collections from around the world that are used in teaching many of our students. Our collections include human and animal remains, ceramic, glass, metal, archaeo-botanical reference materials and stone artefacts, as well as geological materials from around the world. Our state-of-the-art, in-house laboratory facilities provide access to a wide range of techniques, including electron microscopy and X-ray microanalysis, portable X-ray fluorescence, X-ray diffraction, infrared spectroscopy, petrography and metallography, under the supervision of some of the world's leading specialists. We pride ourselves on a truly international outlook and membership, with students and staff from over 40 countries, and involvement in field research projects around the world (see 'A global perspective on the past' in this issue of *Archaeology International*). Furthermore, we host events on many different aspects of archaeology and we are linked to heritage organisations, museums and archaeological societies globally, providing an outstanding research environment for students. Being located in central London, UCL is within walking distance of the British Museum and the British Library.

Students at the Institute are part of a thriving community and, central to this (for our undergraduates) is the Society of Archaeological Students (SAS) comprised of first-, second- and third-year students; the SAS runs a series of event throughout the year and welcomes new undergraduates to the UCL IoA. The Society of Archaeological Masters Students fosters various activities for our several-hundred students who come to study with us each year. Our PhD cohort has a similarly energetic network for facilitating events in that sphere.

Anyone interested in studying with us, at whatever level, is encouraged to get in touch with Charlotte Frearson (undergraduate: c.frearson@ucl.ac.uk) or Lisa Daniel (postgraduate: l.daniel@ucl.ac.uk) for further information.

Undergraduate study

The Institute places great emphasis on the importance of fieldwork – be this physical or, now, digital fieldwork, or indeed museum/gallery work

in one of London's many cultural institutions, although opportunities are often available much further afield. We ask our undergraduates to undertake 70 days of fieldwork (partially funded), which starts in their first week with ArchaeoTech: the Experimental Archaeology course, held at Butser Ancient Farm in Hampshire (one of the leading centres of experimental archaeology in Europe), which provides a hands-on introduction to early technologies (flint knapping, pottery making, bronze casting, building structures and crop processing, among many others).

Following ArchaeoTech, in their first summer, undergraduate students spend a few weeks at a UK-based training school run by UCL IoA staff (Figure 1). Students can then work with UCL IoA staff on their projects and, in their second summer, on archaeological projects around the world. With regard to choices of courses to take, the breadth of our undergraduate provision means our students can find courses to study in almost every area of archaeology. A final-year dissertation project opens up exciting opportunities for all of our students to pursue a topic of particular interest to them, with close guidance, in many cases laying the foundations for study at graduate level.

Masters- and PhD-level studies

Our archaeology graduate studies encompass a wide range of masters and masters of science degrees in key areas such as world archaeology, archaeological sciences, bioarchaeology, cultural heritage, conservation, computational archaeology, environmental archaeology and museum studies. The full list can be found online.¹

At the Institute, you will gain fascinating insights into different periods and societies from around the world. You'll also develop a variety of sought-after, transferable skills that will enable you to pursue research or a career in fields such as heritage and museums. We offer an unrivalled variety of course options, such as artefact studies, bioarchaeology and archaeometallurgy to name a few. If you already have a masters degree and are looking to study for a research degree, we also offer an MPhil/PhD programme for research students, where you will join a community of around 150 researchers working at that level from around the world – currently Australia, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Columbia, Cyprus, Finland,



Figure 1 Students, staff and therapy dog Indy, from the UCL IoA in the field in Greenwich 2023, with Project Lead Dr Stuart Brookes, Andrew Mayfield, Royal Parks archaeologist and UCL IoA alumnus, and staff from the UCL IoA Archaeology South-East fieldwork team providing a grounding in excavation for our students (Source: photograph by Elena Jones)

France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Iceland, India, Israel, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Saudia Arabia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand and the USA.

Current research at the UCL Institute of Archaeology covers fieldwork, laboratory analysis and conservation, artefact studies and theoretical and synthetic work from a wide range of perspectives. Staff projects are active on five continents (see again 'A global perspective on the past' in this volume), including in the Pacific, tropical Africa, Asia, Britain and Europe, China, Egypt, South America and the Caribbean, funded by regular and substantial research grants from a wide range of national and international sources.

For the purposes of research, the Institute is organised into three sections – Archaeological Sciences, Heritage Studies and World Archaeology – with a series of research networks that form hubs and clusters in many areas of archaeology. The Institute also hosts a series of nationally, indeed internationally, known seminars that attract speakers of international repute. In wider terms, our research focuses on a range of topical areas, including archaeological theory; archaeology of hunter-gatherer, early agrarian and ancient urban societies; comparative archaeology in a global context; human palaeobiology; subsistence, diet and health; Indigenous archaeology; museum studies; heritage management and public archaeology; palaeoecology and environmental change; prehistoric, ancient and classical art; quantitative methods and computer applications; and the technology and conservation of ancient materials. Frequently, many research projects cross-cut these various branches of archaeology.

If you are considering PhD study, for further information on how to reach out to a potential supervisor and apply, see the application process on our website.²

Notes

- 1 <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology/study/graduate-taught-programmes>.
- 2 <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology/study/graduate-research/how-apply-and-funding-opportunities>.