

News

Studying at the Institute of Archaeology

Charlotte Frearson^{1,*} and Lisa Daniel¹

How to cite: Frearson, C. and Daniel, L. 'Studying at the Institute of Archaeology'. *Archaeology International*, 2024, 27 (1), pp. 56–59 • DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14324/AI.27.1.09>

Published: 31 December 2024

Copyright:

© 2024, Charlotte Frearson and Lisa Daniel. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Licence (CC-BY) 4.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>, which permits unrestricted use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited • DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14324/AI.27.1.09>

Open access:

Archaeology International is a peer-reviewed open-access journal.

*Correspondence: c.frearson@ucl.ac.uk

¹UCL Institute of Archaeology, UK

Studying at the Institute of Archaeology

Charlotte Frearson and Lisa Daniel

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, libraries, societies and resources that together lie at the heart of London's cultural and intellectual life. The building is home to a large community of academic and professional support staff, undergraduate, master's and PhD students. It is a global hub for archaeology, cultural heritage and museum studies, building on foundations laid in 1937 when the Institute first opened its doors thanks to the foresight 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 a continual flow of visitors from around the world, all of which contribute 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 that reflect our long history as a global leader in the field. The Institute's outstanding archaeological library is complemented by UCL's main library, the University of London's 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 the world, with large teaching and reference collections from around the globe that are used by 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 globe. 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, infra-red spectroscopy, petrography and metallography under the supervision of some of the world's leading specialists. We pride ourselves on a truly international outlook, with students and staff from more than 40 countries, and involvement in field research projects world-wide (see Kratimenos 2024 in this issue). Further, 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. 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) comprising first-, second- and third-year students. The SAS runs a series of events throughout the year and welcomes new undergraduates to the UCL Institute of Archaeology. 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 is encouraged to get in touch with Charlotte Frearson (c.frearson@ucl.ac.uk) regarding undergraduate programmes, or Lisa Daniel (l.daniel@ucl.ac.uk) with enquiries relating to postgraduate study.

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 a wide variety of fieldwork (partly 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, such as 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 Institute of Archaeology staff (see Figure 1). Students can then work with Institute staff on their projects and, in their second summer, on archaeological projects around the world. Regarding course choices, the breadth of our undergraduate provision means our students can study almost every area of archaeology. A final-year dissertation project opens 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.

Master’s and PhD-level studies

Our archaeology graduate studies encompass a wide range of MA and MSc degrees offering an unrivalled variety of course options.¹

At the Institute, you will gain fascinating insights into different periods and societies from around the world. You will 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



Figure 1 Students and staff, and therapy dog Indy, in the field in Greenwich Park 2024 with project lead Stuart Brookes, UCL Institute of Archaeology alumnus Andrew Mayfield, Royal Parks Archaeologist, and staff from the Archaeology South-East fieldwork team providing a grounding in excavation for our students (Source: Charlotte Frearson)

archaeometallurgy, to name a few. If you already have a master's 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 about 110 researchers currently working at that level in Australia, Canada, Chile, Colombia, France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, India, Italy, Lithuania, Mexico, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, South Korea, Spain, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Taiwan 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 *Kratimenos 2024* in this issue), 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 in 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 nationally, indeed internationally, known seminar series that attract speakers of international repute. In wider terms, our research focuses on a wide 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 cut across 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, please see <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology/study/graduate-research/how-apply-and-funding-opportunities>.

Note

- 1 For the full list, see <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology/study/graduate-taught-programmes>.

Reference

Kratimenos, P. 2024. 'A global perspective on the past: The Institute of Archaeology around the world Institute of Archaeology'. *Archaeology International* 27(1): 37–55. <https://doi.org/10.14324/AI.27.1.08>.