Department of Archaeology
Postgraduate study in the UK’s archaeological capital
“We particularly appreciate the broad experience and conservation knowledge of postgraduate students from York, as well as their lively and inquisitive approach. We are pleased to have offered placement opportunities to many students over the years, several of whom have subsequently been employed here when opportunities have arisen.”

Dr Mike Heyworth MBE
Director, Council for British Archaeology
Welcome to the Department of Archaeology

At York you will have the opportunity to explore the subject of archaeology from a broad base, covering humanities, sciences and social sciences. Whichever postgraduate degree you choose, whether taught or research, you will acquire a range of transferable skills which are highly valued by employers within and beyond the heritage sector. Our teaching staff are friendly, approachable and down-to-earth, and there is a discernible ‘King’s Manor’ community which you will be a part of.

As a place to study, York is hard to beat, with the city’s rich heritage and archaeology literally on our doorstep. Our strong links with museums, visitor attractions, archaeological resources and professional expertise will enable you to make the most of your stay here, in some cases through placements and work experience. In fact several of our former postgraduate students now provide placements for the next generation! Various extra-curricular seminar and lecture programmes also provide opportunities to engage with diverse subject matter and with colleagues. One of our lecture programmes (the ‘York Seminars’) is run by the research postgraduate community.

Archaeology addresses questions about our past that cannot be answered in other ways. As archaeologists we are interested in all aspects of the people of the past, their impact on the environment, their beliefs and social systems, the traces they have left behind as well as contemporary attitudes towards those traces: how they should be managed in the present and future. Our range of interests and expertise at York covers this broad range: periods of human history from prehistory to the present; scientific, social scientific and digital applications; artefacts, landscape and buildings; conservation and heritage.

York is a ‘research-led’ institution. This means that cutting-edge research is at the forefront of all we do, and feeds directly into our teaching. In recognition of our leading role as a centre of excellence and innovation in teaching and research, our Department was awarded the Queen’s Anniversary Prize in 2011.

The Department is ranked in the top ten of the university league tables and has consistently performed well in student response surveys, with scores of 97 per cent for student satisfaction.

We look forward to welcoming you to the Department and in the meantime please get in touch if we can help in any way.

Dr John Schofield,
Head of Department

Roman brooch found at Heslington East, site of the University of York’s campus expansion.
REASONS TO STUDY ARCHAEOLOGY AS A POSTGRADUATE AT YORK

- We are recognised as a vibrant research community and a centre of teaching excellence, and we were awarded the Queen’s Anniversary Prize for this in 2011.

- The Department is engaged in a broad range of research, across the periods, much of it taking advantage of the strong interdisciplinary ethos at York.

- Each programme is directed by a leading researcher in the field who will bring their latest research directly into the learning environment.

- You will develop a range of transferable skills which are highly valued by employers, opening the door to a wide variety of occupations both within and beyond the heritage industry and academia.

- You will become part of our friendly community, which is based at the King’s Manor, a beautiful medieval building in the centre of the city of York.

- York is the UK’s archaeological capital. It has probably the largest per capita population of archaeologists, conservators and heritage professionals anywhere in the world, including the York Archaeological Trust, the Council for British Archaeology, English Heritage and the Archaeology Data Service.

- Research students have their own study and computing area.

- We have state-of-the-art analytical laboratories within the BioArCh facilities on campus.

- York is the hub for a number of European and global research projects from early human migration out of Africa, through the re-colonisation of Northern Europe after the last Ice Age, to 18th century sugar plantations in the Caribbean, and monuments to the Cold War.

- The architectural and archaeological heritage of York and the surrounding region makes it one of the best possible places to develop your professional skills and research potential. You will have access to an unrivalled array of significant archaeological and historical sites, buildings and monuments.

“I chose to study Archaeology because I have a deep and abiding fascination with the past. The University of York offers an outstanding programme and location. The assessed lecture and the opportunity to work with professional researchers as peers were most rewarding. York is an amazing heritage city and there is no end to the joys and rewards of living in North Yorkshire.”

Ash Scheder Black
MSc Archaeological Information Systems, 2012
Computer Modelling & SQL Server Applications, Tucson, Arizona, USA
York is one of Europe’s most fascinating historic cities. From its origin as a Roman Colonia, it has been an Anglian Royal seat, a Viking trading centre and a focus of power for medieval kings and archbishops. In the 18th and 19th centuries, it saw periods of significant growth which have left us with a rich industrial heritage of chocolate factories, riverside wharfs and railways.

The Department of Archaeology is based in the King’s Manor, a medieval building in the centre of York, located between York Minster and the Yorkshire Museum. This gives us excellent access to the city and all its amenities.

The King’s Manor originated in the 15th century as the residence of the Benedictine Abbot of St Mary’s. It subsequently served the Tudors and Stuarts as a seat of government. Today, it provides the facilities for a vibrant academic community, including not just the Department of Archaeology, but also the centres for Medieval Studies and Eighteenth Century Studies.

Our purpose-built BioArch facility is situated on the Heslington West campus, near the main library and other University resources, including the Borthwick Institute for Archives.
Archaeology is an excellent subject for acquiring a range of transferable skills that will make you highly employable. An archaeology postgraduate degree provides students with skills in teamwork, adaptability in practical and intellectual problem-solving and critical analysis of evidence, as well as knowledge about specific aspects of the human past and present from all over the world. Through studying Archaeology at York you will also gain other valuable skills, such as how to communicate your ideas effectively, carry out independent research, give professional presentations and think critically. You will also gain extensive experience in IT, teamwork, leadership and project management.

Some of our postgraduates move into an academic career, either teaching or by taking up post-doctoral research positions. Others take advantage of our strong and close relationships with employers and join museums or national and regional heritage organisations. Some work in professional archaeology, in national or local planning departments, while others elect to use their analytical and presentation skills to gain positions in industry, commerce and government.

The Department also has excellent links with cultural heritage organisations based in York, including the Council for British Archaeology, the York Museums Trust, the York Archaeological Trust, and northern offices of English Heritage. It also has strong links with museums and other cultural heritage institutions across Yorkshire and internationally, and work placements are a key feature of some of our programmes.

Our graduates are well represented in many organisations concerned with archaeology and heritage in the UK, such as English Heritage, Historic Scotland, the National Trust, York Archaeological Trust, National Parks, The British Museum and the Oxford Archaeology Unit.

“By undertaking an MA in Cultural Heritage Management at York I was able to take part in rewarding and insightful industry placements that helped me to gain a professional role in the heritage sector before I even graduated! The mix of vocational coursework, site visits and academic research equipped me with all of the necessary skills to succeed in the subject I love, as well as a qualification from an institute that is internationally respected. The social and academic environment that the King’s Manor provides is truly unbeatable, and I would recommend it to anyone wanting to enter the world of archaeology.”

Sarah Spurrier
MA in Cultural Heritage Management, 2012
Project Manager, Civic Voice
The Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) is a Department of Culture, Media and Sport funded project to encourage the voluntary recording of archaeological objects found by members of the public in England and Wales. Every year many thousands of objects are discovered, often by metal-detector users, but also by people whilst out walking, gardening or going about their daily work. Such discoveries offer an important source for understanding our past.

"Since the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) was founded in 1997, no fewer than 12 staff past and present have studied archaeology at York, a very high proportion of all our staff. PAS also enjoys a close research relationship with the Department of Archaeology, collaborating on a number of projects. We are keen to develop this relationship and the 800,000 objects recorded on the PAS database offer a rich quarry for research. York has a unique combination of being closely aligned to archaeology as a profession, as well as being academically top-notch."

Dr Roger Bland, Keeper Departments of Prehistory and Europe and Portable Antiquities and Treasure, British Museum

Career opportunities
As well as the heritage sector and academia, our postgraduates have gone on to pursue a wide variety of careers including:

- Local government and development (planning and consultancy)
- Chartered surveying, land and environmental management
- Computing and IT services
- Business and administration
- Marketing and public relations
- Teaching and education
- Civil Service, law and police authorities
- Accountancy and financial services.

"The quality of teaching I experienced and the opportunity to develop while at York allowed me to pursue my own ideas. Having contact with external speakers also provided an excellent balance between the academic and practical, so that I could develop skills that were relevant to the professional workplace, such as building survey and practical conservation."

Dr Alexander Holton
MA Archaeology of Buildings, 2005
PhD, 2011
Heritage Consultant at Purcell

The quality of teaching I experienced and the opportunity to develop while at York allowed me to pursue my own ideas. Having contact with external speakers also provided an excellent balance between the academic and practical, so that I could develop skills that were relevant to the professional workplace, such as building survey and practical conservation.

Dr Alexander Holton
MA Archaeology of Buildings, 2005
PhD, 2011
Heritage Consultant at Purcell
WHICH POSTGRADUATE DEGREE?

You can apply for a taught degree offering lecture and seminar modules in a specific area, or undertake your own studies under expert academic supervision as part of a research degree. Each route has its own unique features and benefits. Flexible study routes are available to fit around your life and preferred style of study, and you can study for most qualifications on either a full–time or part–time basis.

**Taught postgraduate degrees (full–time/part–time)**
Postgraduate taught degrees can help to develop your knowledge of archaeology and heritage and enhance your employability, or act as a foundation for undertaking further study at research degree level. The postgraduate taught route is ideal for students who want a structured framework for their studies. Most taught degrees are one–year Masters courses delivered via a combination of lectures, seminars and tutorials. Our programmes blend core and optional modules in specialist subject areas, with practical skills modules and a substantial dissertation or research project. Courses normally start at the beginning of term in October.

**Research degrees (full–time/part–time)**
The University of York is a research–intensive university which offers a wide range of research degrees. Research students develop their own project of academic study with their academic supervisor. Training is provided by the Department of Archaeology and assessment is usually by thesis which is submitted at the end of the degree. Our research qualifications can be studied for one, two or three years (full–time), or two, four or six years (part–time).

“Our postgraduate students are a vital part of the academic community, and we pay particular attention to the distinctive contribution that our taught and research students bring to the Department. In turn, we appreciate the specific education and development needs of our postgraduates, and provide them with tailored support.”

Dr Jonathan Finch, Chair Graduate School Board
The Department of Archaeology at the University of York has grown into one of the leading research departments in the UK. It was the fastest rising department in the last Research Assessment Exercise and is ranked sixth in the world based upon the last five years of citation data. In 2011, the Department was awarded the Queen’s Anniversary Prize in recognition of research and teaching excellence.

The Department is engaged in a wide range of research, much of it taking advantage of our strong interdisciplinary ethos. We have an established reputation as an international centre of excellence for medieval and post-medieval archaeology, and have extended our profile to encompass prehistory and bioarchaeology.

We are now the second largest postgraduate teaching centre in the UK, offering a wide diversity of courses. Our enthusiastic and friendly staff ensure that we always feature as one of the top institutions for teaching quality and student satisfaction.

Our current research structure and taught programmes are organised around six main themes: Digital; Heritage and Conservation; Historical; Early Prehistory; Scientific; Landscape and Field.

This diagram shows the relationship between our research areas and taught courses, with research areas indicated by different colours (see key below) and taught courses indicated in grey boxes.

The following pages give more details on each research area and taught courses.
Heritage is everywhere. It is a bend in the road, a building valued by its occupants, objects kept on a mantelpiece, and the lumps and bumps in a field. This broad definition may surprise some people, but heritage, we firmly believe, is ordinary and everyday just as much as it is special and iconic. We also believe that heritage is as much about people as it is about things, and as much about the future as it is about the past.

Heritage and conservation traditionally concern how we manage things, and how we repair and restore them. We also need to be able to understand and record things, as without that understanding conservation becomes meaningless. For every thing, and for every building, there is a heritage community - people who hold views about it, and about what should become of it in the future.

Why does that building matter? By what criteria should we judge it? Can an ordinary place matter: an underpass maybe, or a small copse, or a gateway through which someone last glimpsed a friend or relative? And where conflicts of interest or opinion do arise, who decides which views prevail?

The Department of Archaeology at York has a long history of researching these crucial areas of heritage and conservation practice, and the study of buildings, often undertaking cutting-edge research into specific concepts or techniques. Current research explores the very nature of heritage, and who has a stake in its definition and management, recognising for instance that even those at the margins of mainstream society have an interest in the shape of the world around them.

“English Heritage particularly values the broad grounding that York offers its students in understanding, conserving and managing heritage.”

Dr Edward Impey
Director of Heritage Protection and Planning, English Heritage
The MA in the Archaeology of Buildings is well-supported by resources and facilities within the Department and the city of York. The course will introduce you to the specialised skills required for the historical research, visual analysis and archaeological recording of buildings. It will enable you to develop excellent research and communication skills relating to the research and interpretation of historic buildings.

In recent years the Department has developed increasing expertise in metric survey, including rectified photography, photogrammetry, laser scanning, CAD drawing and computer modelling of historic buildings. The historic buildings of the city and the region form one of the most important resources for the course and we make extensive use of them through visual analysis training and field trips in the taught modules, and as useful subjects for dissertation projects and voluntary experience. The numerous heritage organisations within the city and surrounding area also provide opportunities for networking, placement experience and employment.

"One module which turned out to be invaluable was the one on buildings survey. We learnt to analyse and record buildings by hand as well as electronically – skills that I continue to use today. I found the skills days particularly rewarding, where we learned crafts such as lime plastering and carpentry which was fantastic fun and taught me to appreciate the skill and effort that goes into traditional crafts, as well as how to identify different techniques or styles."

Katie Carmichael (née Graham)
MA in the Archaeology of Buildings,
2008
Architectural Historian, English Heritage

Dr Kate Giles, Director
Archaeology of Buildings
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Dr Gill Chitty, Director
Conservation Studies
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Dr John Schofield, Director
Cultural Heritage Management
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Historical archaeology at York encompasses the medieval and post-medieval periods – from the post-Roman to the present day. We examine the ways in which archaeological investigation is enhanced and made more complex by the intervention of written sources, and espouse a range of approaches to the past. The Department of Archaeology has been at the centre of excellence in historical archaeology for nearly 20 years, and we are now one of the largest groups of historical archaeologists in the UK. Our grounding in traditional approaches has been augmented by expertise in new analytical techniques, methods and theories relating to the landscapes, buildings, as well as material and biological remains of the historic past. We offer a unique combination of research that encompasses network analysis of early-medieval trade, and anthropological approaches to medieval craft and technology, alongside genetic studies of medieval livestock, 3D modelling of late-medieval buildings, biographies of 18th-century colonial landscapes, and contemporary issues of migration. Whatever your interests in the historical period, you’ll find animated discussion and exciting research across a broad range of material cultures and landscapes. This diversity of research interests provides a wealth of opportunities for collaboration and debate between archaeologists, historians, geographers and art historians. We believe historical archaeology is important because it offers a unique perspective on the dynamics and tensions within the contemporary world, by exploring the material and landscape evidence that makes us who we are in the 21st century.

“Medieval Archaeology is a field where I could pursue my interests and have the greatest impact, as well as developing a very broad and diverse skill set. As an MA student, I found the numerous weekly seminar presentations to be very useful in establishing good presentation skills. York is a lovely city, with plenty of archaeology and history on display.”

Robert Collins
MA in Medieval Archaeology, 2001
PhD, 2007
Finds Liaison Officer North East,
Portable Antiquities Scheme

The Borthwick Institute for Archives, one of the biggest archive repositories outside London, is situated on the main University campus.
Historical Archaeology is one of the most dynamic areas of archaeological activity, covering the period from the end of the Middle Ages to the 21st century. It examines key themes such as modernity, industrialisation, capitalism and colonialism through a variety of sources including artefacts, landscapes and documents, drawn from a wide variety of global contexts, including the UK, continental Europe, and the New World. We provide training in the analysis and interpretation of many kinds of evidence; from excavated material to buildings, landscapes, maps, as well as family, parish and state records. In addition, York is home to libraries and archives belonging to the city, York Minster, English Heritage and the former Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England. York also hosts internationally important collections of material culture relevant to historical archaeology at the Castle Museum and at the National Railway Museum. We also have excellent relationships with many people involved with heritage in the region, allowing us access to resources held by private owners and organisations such as the National Trust and the Diocese of York.

Dr Jonathan Finch, Director
Jonathan.finch@york.ac.uk

MA in Historical Archaeology

The MA in Medieval Archaeology focuses on the artefacts, landscapes, buildings, and social, cultural, and environmental contexts of medieval Britain and Western Europe. The course covers the period from the end of the Roman Empire to the Reformation. It explores themes within this period including settlement and agriculture, trade and economy, religion, mortuary practice, politics, power and daily life. The city of York and its surrounding area offer marvellous resources for studying and researching the medieval past. There are several specialist libraries and archives in York that are particularly useful for Medieval Archaeology students. The King’s Manor Library, the York Minster Library, the Raymond Burton Library for Humanities Research, and the Borthwick Institute for Archives all feature extensive collections. York hosts internationally important collections of material culture relevant to medieval archaeology at the Yorkshire Museum, and the collections of the York Archaeological Trust. York is also home to the North and East Yorkshire branch of the Portable Antiquities Scheme, as well as the Council for British Archaeology.

Dr Aleks McClain, Director
Aleksandra.mcclain@york.ac.uk

MA in Medieval Archaeology

“As an overseas student, the King’s Manor is the perfect place to pursue archaeology. The historic city of York, enthusiastic and supportive staff, and an array of courses and resources make for an ideal learning environment. I continue my research within the Department where I happily pursue my passion for the medieval period.”

Alison Leonard
MA in Medieval Archaeology, 2010
PhD student

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Alison Leonard
MA in Medieval Archaeology, 2010
PhD student
Where do we come from? When and how did we acquire our distinctive characteristics as humans – our body form, our mental abilities, our emotions, our appreciation of art and symbols, our language, our omnivorous tastes in food, our technical skills in manipulating the material world, and our sense of time? Where did we originate as a species, and when did we spread out to populate the world? How did our ancestors cope with the dramatic climate changes of the glacial periods and the subsequent phases of global warming and sea-level rise? When did they first establish permanent villages, travel across water, domesticate plants and animals, or create memorials and monuments to the deceased? When, for that matter, did writing first appear?

These are questions that can only be answered by investigating that vast span of time before written records began, stretching back over one million years and more. It was during this long period that the key features of humanity first evolved, many far earlier than was once believed.

Prehistory in York encompasses all these themes, with research that spans the full time range of human existence, and a suite of Masters modules that allows students to choose from a menu of options. Our research is underpinned by active fieldwork both in England and abroad, supported by collaborations with other disciplines ranging from biomolecular and environmental science to psychology, and sustained by a belief that the long-term perspective of prehistory gives a unique and necessary insight into our present condition.

Our research includes exploration of the landscapes of early human evolution in the African Rift and Saudi Arabia, new excavations at the classic Mesolithic site of Star Carr in Yorkshire, and research into the prehistory of human emotions.

“I was awarded a grant by the Central Researcher Development Team to undertake a project to engage young people’s interest in the Mesolithic period. I led a group of PhD, MA and undergraduate students in creating a suite of fun activities based on all aspects of life in the Mesolithic period. Our activities have been combined into a resource pack which has been distributed to Young Archaeologists Club branches across the UK as well as put online to download for free.”

Emily Hellewell
MA in Archaeological Research, 2007
PhD student
MA in Mesolithic Studies

The MA in Mesolithic Studies at York is the only programme in the country that focuses exclusively on the Mesolithic period. It places strong emphasis on the integration of theory and cutting-edge scientific techniques and draws on the extensive community of Mesolithic researchers at York, with projects in many areas of the world. This area of research has gathered huge momentum in recent years and there is much new evidence appearing on sites, from the numerous structures which keep being discovered, to monumental pits, to new types of artefacts. Studying the Mesolithic period at York, you will have the chance to become involved in exciting and ground-breaking research at sites such as Star Carr and Howick.

MSc in Coastal and Marine Archaeology

The MSc in Coastal and Marine Archaeology explores the role and significance of coastlines, coastal environments and marine resources within a global perspective. The course emphasises the effects of changes in sea-level and other shoreline processes and the study and significance of prehistoric submerged landscapes. We focus on the analysis and interpretation of shell middens and marine molluscs as one of the most visible and world-wide archaeological expressions of coastal settlement. We have active projects in many regions of the world and connections to international research networks. You will have an opportunity to explore themes relating to the palaeoeconomy and palaeoecology of coastlines, the geoarchaeology of site formation and landscape context, and the distinctive patterns of social development and symbolic life often associated with coastal settings.

MSc in Early Prehistory

The MSc in Early Prehistory offers you a wide range of opportunities to extend and deepen your understanding and research experience of the Early Prehistoric period. What makes us human? How did early human societies work? How different were Neanderthals from ourselves and why did they die out? What was life like in the Ice Age? We debate these questions and many others while placing emphasis on developing your personal strengths and interests, providing you with a broad grounding in early prehistory and helping you to develop useful transferable skills. The archaeology of human origins is a fascinating and dynamic area of research, with new evidence and theories constantly changing our interpretations about who we are and where we come from.

Professor Nicky Milner, Director
Mesolithic Studies
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Professor Geoff Bailey, Director
Coastal and Marine Archaeology
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Dr Penny Spikins, Director
Early Prehistory
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A barbed point found at Star Carr, the Mesolithic archaeological site in North Yorkshire.
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SCIENCE – RESEARCH AND COURSES

“I worked on a project investigating the survival of plant microfossils in ceramic food crusts. The Department of Archaeology is contagiously enthusiastic and new opportunities for international collaborations are constantly being forged, and shared with students. I now have the practical skills to make my own research opportunities. After graduating I was awarded a postdoc with the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science to live in Japan and study cuisine residues in Jomon pottery.”

Hayley Saul
PhD, 2011
Japan Society for the Promotion of Science

Archaeology often raises questions that can be addressed using knowledge and techniques from the natural sciences. At York, we have an internationally-renowned group specialising in the interface between archaeology and biology, from ecology through comparative anatomy to biomolecular research. We often start with the physical remains of humans and other animals. By applying an integrated range of investigations at all scales, from morphological examination to microscopical study to chemical analyses, we aim to extract detailed information about past people and animals, and about their interactions with each other and with their wider environment. Our research in protein chemistry, bone stable isotopes and the genetics of past populations links directly into the content of our Masters teaching and projects. And we do not forget the sediments from which old bones are excavated, with a team which is pioneering new ways of extracting information from ancient soils and sediments.

Our science group is mostly located in our purpose-built BioArCh labs, situated on the Heslington campus. This gives us easy access to colleagues and facilities in the Departments of Biology and Chemistry, and to anatomist colleagues in the Hull–York Medical School. Our building houses substantial comparative collections of animal bones, facilities for sectioning and microscopical work, gas-chromatography equipment, clean lab facilities for analytical work, and lab space for student projects. The nearby Technical Facility adds further analytical kit and Scanning Electron Microscopy, and collaboration with the Medical School gives us access to morphometric hard- and software. We are a lively, international and informal group.

BioArCh is a collaborative research facility formed by the Archaeology, Biology and Chemistry Departments.
MSc in Bioarchaeology

The MSc in Bioarchaeology is taught by our large team of leading researchers working on different areas of bioarchaeological research and answering important archaeological questions. Our expertise includes osteoarchaeology and biomolecular analysis of human remains; with the options of integrating with Human Evolution, which includes both Hard Tissue Biology and Musculoskeletal Anatomy. The MSc in Bioarchaeology benefits from its twin locations in the King’s Manor and BioArCh, our campus-based science facility. We have specialised lab facilities and association with the University’s Departments of Biology and Chemistry.

Dr Oliver Craig, Director
Bioarchaeology
oliver.craig@york.ac.uk

MSc in Zooarchaeology

The MSc in Zooarchaeology is ideal for graduates in archaeology and anthropology who wish to further study the relationships between humans and animals. It is also suited to graduates in biology, geography and geology who wish to extend their studies in a specialised area of archaeology. Any consideration of the human past is incomplete without considering the animals that played an essential role in economic and symbolic activities. At York we combine zooarchaeology and biomolecular analysis of animal remains and place exclusive focus on animals, from comparative anatomy to interpretation, world-wide and across all periods. Students studying zooarchaeology have the option of combining with human osteoarchaeology modules and the flexibility to tailor the course to their individual needs and interests. We have extensive comparative collections, including a nationally-important fish collection and have a close association with York Archaeological Trust (YAT).

Professor Terry O’Connor, Director
Zooarchaeology
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DIGITAL HERITAGE – RESEARCH AND COURSES

Computers have transformed the way we practise archaeology, from mobile computing in the field, to Geographical Information Systems, and 3D virtual reality models of our interpretations. The use of computers in archaeology is entering a new phase of unparalleled development, moving on from a specialist methodology on the margins to a powerful practical and analytical tool used across all areas of archaeological interest.

The Department of Archaeology has been active in computer applications from the early pioneering days and is now a major international research centre with a number of European partners, as well as links with practitioners in the United States and Australia.

The Department has hosted Internet Archaeology, the first online peer-reviewed e-journal for Archaeology since 1996, and also hosts the UK’s national digital data archive for the historic environment sector, the world-leading Archaeology Data Service. We have twice won the British Archaeological Award for best Archaeological Innovation for our IT work, in 2008 and 2012. The Department is now a major player in the University’s new inter-disciplinary Centre for Digital Heritage. Our research focuses on the application of web technologies, information management and dissemination, and visualisation techniques.

“Digital heritage is a growing and exciting field of research. Access to a wide range of digital resources for archaeologists plays a vital role in opening up new avenues of research in the discipline and affords opportunities for cross-sectoral working.”

Catherine Hardman, Deputy Director (Collections)
Archaeology Data Service
catherine.hardman@york.ac.uk

“I chose to study the MSc in Archaeological Information Systems (AIS) because my main two interests in archaeology were Viking–Age runic inscriptions, and computer applications in archaeology. The MSc in AIS has given me employable skills both within archaeology and more generally.”

Marcus Smith
MSc Archaeological Information Systems, 2003
Operations Developer, Swedish Antiquities Board
The MSc in Archaeological Information Systems makes use of the University of York’s world-leading expertise in e-publishing and digital archiving. The course provides students with applied practical experience in a full range of internet applications, databases, GIS, CAD, and computer modelling, as well as a broad foundation in archaeological computing applications. Our excellent research computing facilities include a well-equipped spatial computing laboratory, with plotters, digitisers and scanners. Work placements are a key feature of the course and provide students with valuable experience of using IT in an archaeological work environment. Our students have excellent career prospects because we have strong links with museums and other cultural heritage institutions in York.

Professor Julian Richards, Director
Archaeological Information Systems
Julian.Richards@york.ac.uk

Dr Sara Perry, Director
Digital Heritage
sara.perry@york.ac.uk

The MSc in Digital Heritage aims to train professionals who wish to work in digital archiving, museum and education display and curation. It draws on our existing strengths in Archaeological Information Systems and Cultural Heritage Management, while also exploring the relevance of new and mobile technologies in creating and consuming heritage information. Our dedicated IT suite has a full range of software including generic and specialist archaeological packages. You will have the opportunity for a work experience placement, and also benefit from the on-site presence of the Archaeology Data Service.


“The AIS course is a MUST for anyone wishing to pursue a career in any aspect of digital archaeology. The blend of practical application and theory, together with superb teaching and facilities, equip you with the skills needed to embark upon a successful career both academically and commercially.”

Geoff Arnott
MSc Archaeological Information Systems, 2007
Director, Heritage Technology Ltd.
Field monuments, sites and landscapes are encountered by us all, whether we think of urban sites such as York and its medieval walls, or rural monuments like Stonehenge. Such features underpin the very fabric of our world, and this in itself renders the subject interesting for many people, curious about the world in which they live and how it came to be as it is.

Field archaeology is usually concerned with the investigation of individual sites and their relationships, whereas landscape archaeology places these sites into their wider context. Both raise issues about the very different ways in which people have engaged with the natural world: humanity’s relationship with the environment is undeniably one of the hot topics in contemporary society.

In addition, such work demands that we confront some difficult questions: is our first responsibility to protect ‘the past’ (whose past?) or to investigate it, even if that process of investigation is itself destructive? Who should pay for such interventions – the State because ‘archaeology belongs to everyone’, or the developer threatening it with modern building? And if our aim is to understand, what is the best level of resolution: the humble, individual artefact, the site, or the whole landscape?

Modern field and landscape archaeologists apply a wide range of methods to record site and landscape features, from geophysical survey, to the use of LiDAR and laser scanning. Both make use of the environmental sciences; from the study of animal bones and seeds, in order to reconstruct past diet and food production systems, through to the study of soils and pollen, where the aim is to reconstruct the characteristics of the natural world in the past. It is this combination of fieldwork, scientific approaches and then the integration of a rich variety of evidence that appeals to so many people: one day you might be testing soils in the lab, the next day looking at historic maps and plans, the day after handling a newly uncovered precious artefact in the field.

“As a mature student needing to retrain after a career gap to bring up a family, I knew exactly what I wanted to do – follow my first passion as a teenager to be an archaeologist! I had one of the best years of my life doing the MA in Field Archaeology at the University of York, and it proved to be the passport to a new career.”

Yvonne Luke
MA Field Archaeology, 2003
Historic Environment Field Advisor, English Heritage
MA in Field Archaeology

The MA in Field Archaeology offers professional training at postgraduate level. The course combines issues of method and theory, offering critical analyses of legislation and management, training for best practice in the field, instruction in stratigraphic, spatial, and assemblage analysis, and discussion of approaches to archiving and dissemination. This course will give you a thorough knowledge of how, and why, archaeological fieldwork has developed over time and acquaint you with the major methodologies employed within modern fieldwork and what they mean for accomplished project design. It is suitable both for in-service training and for graduates who intend to specialise in professional fieldwork. You are taught through a combination of workshops, lectures and seminars, personal study and practical exercises. Opportunities for practical training are available through placement with a local archaeological organisation and project work.

Steve Roskams, Director (Above right)
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Dr Kevin Walsh, Director (Left)
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MA in Landscape Archaeology

The MA in Landscape Archaeology is designed for students with an interest in how people have engaged with landscapes and the environment during the prehistoric and protohistoric periods. The course is designed to explore the links between landscape theory and practice, and provides a broad foundation in the recognition, recording, interpretation and conservation of archaeological landscapes. The course comprises modules that assess the development of landscape archaeology and the range of approaches and methods employed in this increasingly important field of study. The skills modules allow students to engage with a series of important methods including topographic survey, geoarchaeology and Geographical Information Systems. We integrate theoretical perspectives and practical elements taught by our staff with a wide range of interests in landscape archaeology across the prehistoric, classical and historic periods.

Students from the University of York, Aix-en-Provence and the Université de Savoie have collaborated in taking samples that are used for pollen analysis in order to reconstruct changes in vegetation over the last 5000 years.
The University of York is ranked eighth in the world and number one in the UK in the Times Higher Education world rankings of universities less than 50 years old – performing equally well on teaching and research quality measures.

York archaeology students have access to an unrivalled array of internationally significant archaeological and historical sites, buildings and monuments in York, the Yorkshire region and further afield. The region boasts some of the finest medieval cathedrals, parish churches and country houses, on which staff and students also carry out cutting-edge research.

The wider region is stunning, with no less than three National Parks within striking distance and a wealth of archaeological sites. Situated halfway between London and Edinburgh, York is easy to reach by road and rail and is no more than an hour or two from several major airports and ferry terminals.
HOW TO APPLY

We welcome all enquiries from potential postgraduates.

Applying to York for postgraduate study couldn’t be simpler – there is an online application system that allows you to do anything from register an informal interest in a course or research topic to submitting a full application.

For more information about our courses, Visit Days and the Department, please contact:

Tel: +44 (0)1904 323901  
Email: archaeology@york.ac.uk  
Website: www.york.ac.uk/archaeology/postgraduate-study

Certificates and diplomas

All of our taught Masters programmes are available as certificates and diplomas. The 60-credit certificate covers two core modules and four skills modules over the Autumn and Spring Terms. The 120-credit diploma consists of two core, and two option modules, four skills modules and a short research essay in the Summer Term.

“I chose to study at the University of York because of the state-of-the-art facilities, including the micromorphology lab, one of only four in the UK. There are also many opportunities to expand within the Department and develop my own skills and become part of a thriving archaeological community.”

Helen Williams  
PhD student
Join the world-leading Department of Archaeology at the University of York. With impressive credentials and a supportive atmosphere, our Department will provide you with a myriad of opportunities to develop your knowledge of archaeology and equip you with skills highly valued by employers.

For full details of all the courses available and information about the Department, please see our website at www.york.ac.uk/archaeology or the postgraduate prospectus at www.york.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/prospectus.