

Archaeology

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Preface

Subject benchmark statements provide a means for the academic community to describe the nature and characteristics of programmes in a specific subject or subject area. They also represent general expectations about standards for the award of qualifications at a given level in terms of the attributes and capabilities that those possessing qualifications should have demonstrated.

This subject benchmark statement, together with others published concurrently, refers to the **bachelor's degree with honours**¹. In addition, some subject benchmark statements provide guidance on integrated master's awards.

Subject benchmark statements are used for a variety of purposes. Primarily, they are an important external source of reference for higher education institutions (HEIs) when new programmes are being designed and developed in a subject area. They provide general guidance for articulating the learning outcomes associated with the programme but are not a specification of a detailed curriculum in the subject.

Subject benchmark statements also provide support to HEIs in pursuit of internal quality assurance. They enable the learning outcomes specified for a particular programme to be reviewed and evaluated against agreed general expectations about standards. Subject benchmark statements allow for flexibility and innovation in programme design and can stimulate academic discussion and debate upon the content of new and existing programmes within an agreed overall framework. Their use in supporting programme design, delivery and review within HEIs is supportive of moves towards an emphasis on institutional responsibility for standards and quality.

Subject benchmark statements may also be of interest to prospective students and employers, seeking information about the nature and standards of awards in a given subject or subject area.

The relationship between the standards set out in this document and those produced by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies for individual disciplines will be a matter for individual HEIs to consider in detail.

This subject benchmark statement represents a revised version of the original published in 2000. The review process was overseen by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) as part of a periodic review of all subject benchmark statements published in this year. The review and subsequent revision of the subject benchmark statement was undertaken by a group of subject specialists drawn from and acting on behalf of the subject community. The revised subject benchmark statement went through a full consultation with the wider academic community and stakeholder groups.

QAA publishes and distributes this subject benchmark statement and other subject benchmark statements developed by similar subject-specific groups.

¹ This is equivalent to the honours degree in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (level 10) and in the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (level 6).

The Disability Equality Duty (DED) came into force on 4 December 2006². The DED requires public authorities, including HEIs, to act proactively on disability equality issues. The Duty complements the individual rights focus of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and is aimed at improving public services and outcomes for disabled people as a whole. Responsibility for making sure that such duty is met lies with HEIs.

The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) has published guidance³ to help HEIs prepare for the implementation of the Duty and provided illustrative examples on how to take the duty forward. HEIs are encouraged to read this guidance when considering their approach to engaging with components of the Academic Infrastructure⁴, of which subject benchmark statements are a part.

Additional information that may assist HEIs when engaging with subject benchmark statements can be found in the DRC revised *Code of Practice: Post-16 Education*⁵, and also through the Equality Challenge Unit⁶ which is established to promote equality and diversity in higher education.

² In England, Scotland and Wales

³ Copies of the guidance *Further and higher education institutions and the Disability Equality Duty*, guidance for principals, vice-chancellors, governing boards and senior managers working in further education colleges and HEIs in England, Scotland and Wales, may be obtained from the DRC at www.drc-gb.org/library/publications/disability_equality_duty/further_and_higher_education.aspx

⁴ An explanation of the Academic Infrastructure, and the roles of subject benchmark statements within it, is available at www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure

⁵ Copies of the DRC revised *Code of Practice: Post-16 Education* may be obtained from the DRC at www.drc-gb.org/employers_and_service_provider/education/higher_education.aspx

⁶ Equality Challenge Unit, www.ecu.ac.uk

Foreword

The Subject Committee for Archaeology (SCFA), formerly SCUPHA, was contacted by QAA in August 2005 with a request to review the published subject benchmark statement for archaeology and to consider the nature and extent of any necessary revisions. Following extensive discussions at meetings of SCFA in November 2005 and March 2006, it was agreed that only minor modifications were appropriate to bring the subject benchmark statement up to date. A review group was established to receive comments and undertake the redrafting.

As a subject, archaeology remains popular for study at HE level and application numbers for single, combined and joint honours programmes all remain buoyant. Throughout their work, the review group was mindful of the gradually changing nature of archaeology as a discipline, its expanding professional context in the UK and beyond, and the position of specialist subjects such as archaeology within the broader HE environment. The changes made to the subject benchmark statement reflect these shifts, especially the increasing scientific and technical emphasis visible in many programmes and the importance of direct engagement with the raw materials of the subject whether in the field, museum, archive, layout room, laboratory or library.

Since the publication of the original subject benchmark statement in 2000, the Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for History, Classics and Archaeology has made great strides in promoting teaching and learning initiatives. The subject centre is now the focal point for the promotion and coordination of pedagogic research in the field, and works closely with archaeology departments and academic groupings in HE providers around the country to provide support and training for academic staff.

Account has been taken of a number of relevant papers and reports published since the subject benchmark statement was first drafted, notably *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (2001) and *European Standards and Guidelines* (2002).

In reviewing the section of the subject benchmark statement on standards, the review group has retained the existing levels of attainment: 'threshold' equating to the minimal acceptable level of performance expected of an honours degree student and 'typical' relating to the standard reached expected of the majority of honours degree students (the modal level of performance).¹

This document seeks to make explicit the nature and standards of HE programmes which carry the word archaeology in their title, or in which archaeology is included as a significant component in the programme leading to the award.

December 2006

¹ The review group is of the opinion that a threshold level of performance is broadly equivalent to the bottom of the Third class honours degree, while a typical level of performance is defined as being the boundary between the Upper and Lower divisions of the Second class in conventional honours degrees classification.

1 Introduction

1.1 Archaeology provides a unique perspective on the human past, on what it is to be human. As the only subject that deals with the entire human past in all its temporal and spatial dimensions, it is fundamental to our understanding of how we evolved, how our societies came into being, and how they changed over time.

1.2 Archaeology can be defined as the study of the human past through material remains (the latter is an extremely broad concept and includes evidence in the current landscape, from buildings and monuments to ephemeral traces of activity; buried material, such as artefacts, biological remains, and structures; and written sources).

1.3 Archaeology's chronological range is from the earliest hominins millions of years ago to the present day, its geographical scope is regionally-specific but worldwide, its scale of enquiry ranges from distributions and processes of change at the global scale and over millennia down to the actions of individuals.

1.4 Archaeology, a subject that has long been of interest to a wide general public, emerged as a separate discipline in the mid-nineteenth century. During the last 150 years it has seen many changes of emphasis, but the main focus has remained the discovery and interpretation of the material remains of past societies. Some of the main changes have arisen through improved understanding of the nature of the material record and its interplay with the development of new techniques of recovery and analysis, others from theoretical developments affecting the kinds of questions asked by archaeologists about their material. The result today is a distinct discipline with its own methodological and theoretical frameworks drawing on a rich archive of past work.

1.5 Throughout its history, archaeology has had a close association with a range of other disciplines, initially mainly the humanities, but in recent decades increasingly also a broad range of sciences and social sciences. Much research and teaching in archaeology are therefore multi or interdisciplinary: a particular topic or theme may be approached from different perspectives, and with different methodologies.

1.6 In the sciences there is also a recognition of the quality and significance of archaeological data for other disciplines: one of the key characteristics of archaeological data is time depth, and the ability to examine the effects of process within a well-understood chronological framework is vital for the study of contemporary concerns such as human impact on ecosystems, globalisation, and sustainability. The strong links with other disciplines means that archaeology is often studied in joint or combined honours programmes (eg history, geography, anthropology, classics and cultural heritage). As with single honours archaeology programmes, these degrees can be located in a range of faculties and schools (eg arts, social science, science etc). In most cases there are subject benchmark statements relevant to the non-archaeological components of joint and combined honours programmes.

1.7 Archaeology has been taught as a distinct subject in UK HE institutions since the early years of the twentieth century. There are now some 30 archaeology departments or units within UK HE institutions and archaeology is included in programmes taught at several others. Few incoming students have had the opportunity to undertake formal courses in archaeology. The educational background of incoming students is extremely varied: this diversity, embracing a range of subjects across the humanities and sciences

all with some relevance to archaeology, provides a very stimulating environment for staff and students and is one of the strengths of archaeology programmes.

1.8 Mature students have traditionally provided a significant proportion of the intake, many entering with non-traditional qualifications but often with practical experience of the subject. The exit routes for archaeology graduates are equally varied: master's courses (increasingly a prerequisite for research degrees and professional advancement); museums; the burgeoning profession of field archaeology; the wider tourism, heritage, and media sectors; and more general graduate positions.

1.9 The broad-based nature of the subject and of the skills it gives graduates provide a strong grounding for a wide range of career paths: the archaeology graduate is extremely well equipped with transferable skills from the mix of humanities and science training, engagement with theory and practice, and individual and team-based learning, together with the intellectual curiosity to continue learning, and the skills to benefit from challenging work environments. Archaeology also offers much non-professional involvement, via continuing education courses, local societies, museums, heritage groups and so on, so graduates not employed within archaeology have many opportunities for lifelong learning and to share their expertise within the community.

2 Defining principles and contexts for degree programmes

2.1 Archaeology at HE level firmly aligns itself with a liberal view of education and learning, while recognising the practical application of the subject's knowledge base and skills. Understanding the interplay between theories and methods, central to any archaeology programme, is achieved by involving students directly in the recovery and analysis of primary material via involvement in departmental or other approved research projects. Departmental teaching and research programmes, therefore, commonly underpin each other. Because all archaeology departments are research active, and master's courses and postgraduate research students are well distributed throughout the sector, archaeology undergraduates learn within lively and stimulating research cultures and work with primary research materials. The undergraduate learning experience frequently involves the same excitement of discovery as that of the professional researcher.

2.2 Four key contexts provide the foundation on which archaeology degree programmes are based:

- historical and social
- ethical and professional
- theoretical
- scientific.

The historical and social context

2.3 Archaeology is concerned with 'writing history' in the sense of furnishing and evaluating narrative accounts of past cultures and societies, both prehistoric and historic. Thus archaeology must engage adequately with other disciplines studying the same cultures through other sources of evidence such as art, architecture, and visual culture (variously analysed in terms of form, style, function, chronology, and social meaning) and, for the historical periods, texts and documents.

2.4 Archaeology is also embedded in the events, structures and development of the contemporary world. It is through this close association with present-day structures such as class, colonialism, ethnicity and gender that archaeology derives much of its power as an intellectual discipline. Archaeology is often a contested discipline, with different stakeholders disagreeing over interpretation and appropriate action towards the remains of the past and their display. The subject provides the material resources through which identity is created at many levels in society.

The ethical and professional context

2.5 Archaeology is now recognised in many countries as central to the heritage and tourism industries and increasingly important in the environmental, development and planning sectors. The opportunities that archaeology is seen to offer have changed many aspects of the subject over the past 20 years.

2.6 In some countries new areas of employment have opened up, bringing their own requirements for professional standards and bodies to monitor and develop these standards. In the UK there is the Institute of Field Archaeologists (their Codes, Guidelines and Standards are available via their website: www.archaeologists.net); similar associations exist in the Netherlands, Ireland, and the United States of America, The European Association of Archaeologists (www.e-a-a.org), a membership association for the whole continent, promotes its own Code of Practice and Principles of Conduct. In many countries artefacts, monuments and landscapes of the past are protected through government guidance, national legislation and international treaty, for example, the World Heritage Convention.

2.7 These developments have not only led to greatly increased employment opportunities for archaeology graduates but encouraged archaeologists to reflect on the role of the past in the present and their own position within the process of gaining knowledge.

2.8 One important question posed has been: who owns the past? - a question which reflects how the sources of authority to study and interpret the past have changed. Another emerging theme is that of sustainability: how can we balance our need to preserve the archaeological resource, which is finite, against the needs of development but also of research?

2.9 As a result of the interest of professional associations in vocational training of archaeologists, National Occupational Standards in Archaeological Practice have been developed on behalf of the Archaeology training Forum by the Cultural Heritage National Training Organisation and the Institute of Field Archaeologists; these may be accessed at www.torc.org.uk/nos/

The theoretical context

2.10 Archaeological theory has many facets, almost as many as the traditional divisions by period, region and continent. Perspectives vary enormously: from Marxism to materiality, from feminist theory to cultural ecology, socio-biology to social theory. The vitality of theoretical debate within the subject is one of its intellectual attractions as an HE subject. It was greatly intensified when the orientation of the subject was redirected towards an anthropological archaeology employing an explicitly scientific methodology. This built on and added to the core tradition of culture history which recognises that archaeology is, in essence, a unique way of writing about the past.

2.11 The combination of the two traditions has fostered evaluative and interpretative perspectives on the past. The result is a pluralistic approach to the study of the past, yet one characterised by a spirit of intellectual tolerance arising from the strong sense of the discipline as a community of scholarship.

2.12 Four elements of this anthropological archaeology can be recognised.

- Archaeologists have to recognise many temporal and spatial scales from the micro to macro, the individual to the civilisation. Integrating these scales of social and technical activity unites the many period and geographical interests into a study of past human life rather than just past cultures.
- Social life is now conceived as interconnected, a network of relationships rather than simply a set of formal structures and institutions which need describing. Archaeological theory addresses the question of change and variation within such complex webs. It draws on the immense archive of past societies preserved through material remains to provide interpretations and to seek understanding of variation through comparison.
- As a result, archaeologists seek to place their findings within a wider context. Whether the scale is regional or global, the driving aim is to establish the significance of research within wider frames of reference within and beyond the discipline. Archaeology is a critical element of interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research addressing many topical issues and themes.
- Archaeological theory is informed by self-reflection: consideration of the material basis of archaeology, the contested nature of objects, the social relationships that are spun around them and the people who use and interpret them, have led to the conception of the past as an active, rather than a neutral activity, to 'facts' which are theory-laden and to issues of interpretation which cannot be ignored or trivialised because they are 'just' in the past.

The scientific context

2.13 Archaeological science is the application of scientific techniques to archaeological problems, whose methodologies ultimately lie in a broad range of sciences including physics, chemistry, biochemistry, biology, medicine, geology, geography and materials science. Thinking scientifically and an awareness of scientific techniques should be part of the armoury of every archaeologist. Many techniques have more than one application, but major research themes include:

- the formation of the archaeological record
- human involvement in landscape evolution within the framework of climatic imperatives
- the identification and movement of human populations
- the classification and identification of human diets
- the development of human cognitive faculties; and the origins and development of economic and social systems.

2.14 Archaeological science has provided the chronometric frameworks which are indispensable to the ordering of our material. Many analytical techniques allow artefact characterisation, composition and manufacturing processes to be investigated.

2.15 Conservation science has elucidated the processes that cause the deterioration of artefacts, sites, and monuments, and has enabled the development of materials and techniques for their long-term conservation. Environmental science has added fundamental knowledge to our understanding of the human use of landscapes, subsistence and social life. Biomolecular techniques have enabled the identification of human dietary change, and the migration of human populations around the globe.

2.16 Information technology (IT) is critical in the analysis, visualisation and interpretation of the past. Remote sensing and prospection have revolutionised the exploration and understanding of past landscapes and settlements. The archaeological context in which the science is embedded also ensures a healthy reflection on the methods and ethics of the wider science agenda.

Implications for archaeology degree programmes

2.17 These four contexts are the foundation stones upon which all archaeology degrees, whether single or combined honours, are built. However, we expect degree programmes to vary in their aims, objectives and emphases as a reflection of the diversity, vitality, and confidence of our discipline, though the integration of the humanities and sciences is likely to underpin most degree programmes given that this interdisciplinarity is as much philosophical as practical/methodological.

2.18 Particular degree programmes will be located at different points within a triangle drawn between the complementary archaeologies of the humanities, sciences and professional practice. A department teaching single and combined honours degrees will probably position the programmes it offers at different locations within the tri-polar range. The triangle stresses the contexts, the interdisciplinarity, and the overarching practice which departments seek to instil in students. The combination of practice, the commitment to primary data, and the focus on object and landscape-centred learning, provide the means to identify the extent of the discipline.

3 Subject knowledge and understanding

3.1 Despite the interdisciplinary nature of archaeology, and the varied pathways through it that different archaeology programmes can be expected to take, all graduates of degree courses which contain a substantial component (at least 50 per cent) of archaeology can be expected to possess a platform of knowledge and understanding in certain areas. These areas include:

- knowledge and understanding of the origins and development of archaeology as a discipline
- understanding of the intellectual vitality of archaeology, its theoretical basis, current debates over approaches to interpretation, and archaeology's relationship to other disciplines
- appreciation of the historical, social, cultural, ethical, and political contexts of archaeological research, management, interpretation, and presentation
- familiarity with the diverse sources of evidence used by archaeologists (including excavated, documentary, representational, observational, artefactual, environmental and scientific)
- familiarity with the basic concepts which underpin the subject (such as archaeological uses of assemblage, culture and style; approaches to typology, taxonomy and ancient technology; stratigraphic context; temporality; and landscape)
- understanding of the causes of variation in the reliability of different classes of evidence from archaeological contexts (such as taphonomy; cultural and non-cultural transformations; depositional processes; and recovery procedures)
- understanding of the relationship between the practice of archaeology and the institutional context of that practice
- knowledge of the legal and ethical frameworks for research and professional practice in archaeology
- appreciation of the importance of the recovery of primary data and new information through practical experience in the field or through collections-based, records-based, or artefact-based study
- critical awareness of methodologies for quantifying, analysing and interpreting primary data
- understanding of the concepts and application of scientific methods used in collecting, analysing and interpreting archaeological data
- interpret scientific information, integrating chronometric, environmental and materials science data with archaeological models
- understanding of the use of analogy and experiment in archaeological analysis
- broad and comparative knowledge of the archaeology of a number of geographical regions
- broad and comparative knowledge of the archaeology of a number of chronological periods

- from specialised investigation, deep understanding of one or more distinct classes of archaeological material
- appreciation of the fragile and non-renewable nature of the archaeological resource and the need for sustainable approaches to its use and conservation.

3.2 In the case of degree programmes where archaeology constitutes 40 per cent or less of the total (including joint and combined honours programmes, and cases where archaeology units can be taken as optional components within other kinds of modularised programmes), the delivery of an appropriate platform of knowledge and understanding will be integral to the design of each individual archaeology module. In such situations it is expected that both the knowledge and understanding attained

by students, and the teaching environment, will be consistent with the standards expressed in this subject benchmark statement. For guidance on appropriate levels of attainment in the non-archaeology components of such programmes, reference should always be made to the relevant subject benchmark statement.

4 Skills

4.1 The range and depth of the skills acquired by an archaeology graduate will of course vary according to the location of the degree programme within the humanities-science-practice triangle and the number of archaeology modules taken. However, the platform of knowledge and understanding outlined above will ensure that any archaeology graduate will have acquired a broad range of skills. The single honours graduate will normally have most, and the combined honours graduate many, of the skills identified below.

Subject-specific skills

4.2 As appropriate to the breadth and depth of the programme being pursued, students will be equipped to:

- draw down and apply appropriate scholarly, theoretical and scientific principles and concepts to archaeological problems
- practise core fieldwork techniques of identification, surveying, recording, excavation and sampling
- practise core post-excavation/post-survey techniques such as stratigraphic analysis of field records, phasing and data archiving
- practise core laboratory techniques of recording, measurement, analysis and interpretation of archaeological material
- discover and recognise the archaeological significance of material remains and landscapes
- interpret spatial data, integrating theoretical models, traces surviving in present-day landscapes and excavation data
- observe and describe different classes of primary archaeological data, and objectively record their characteristics
- select and apply appropriate statistical and numerical techniques to process archaeological data, recognising the potential and limitations of such techniques.

Generic skills

4.3 Archaeology graduates will also be equipped with general and widely applicable skills, including the ability to:

- assemble coherent research/project designs
- marshal and critically appraise other people's arguments
- produce logical and structured arguments supported by relevant evidence
- present effective oral presentations for different kinds of audiences
- prepare effective written communications for different readerships
- make effective and appropriate use of relevant IT
- make critical and effective use of information retrieval skills using paper-based and electronic resources
- make effective and appropriate forms of visual presentation
- plan, design, execute and document a programme of primary research, working independently
- collaborate effectively in a team via experience of working in a group, for example, through fieldwork, laboratory and/or project work
- appreciate the importance of health and safety procedures and responsibilities (both personal and with regard to others) in the field and the laboratory
- appreciate and be sensitive to different cultures, and deal with unfamiliar situations
- to evaluate critically one's own and others' opinions, from an appreciation of the practice of archaeology in its changing theoretical, methodological, professional, ethical, and social contexts
- engage with relevant aspects of current broad instrumentalist agendas such as global perspectives, employability, enterprise, and creativity.

5 Teaching, learning and assessment

5.1 Given archaeology's variety of intellectual styles and traditions, the teaching and learning environments developed by different departments will reflect their position within the humanities-science-practice triangle. However, archaeology programmes generally demonstrate a considerable concern and interest in pedagogical developments evidenced in a wide variety of teaching methods, using IT, where appropriate.

5.2 The interactions between teaching, research and primary data handling are key elements of the environment in which archaeology courses must be taught, to the extent that courses should only be delivered in departments with strong research cultures. Staff teaching within archaeology programmes must be individually competent to deliver those course units for which they are responsible and collectively able to provide the breadth and depth of specialist and non-specialist subjects embraced by the course as a whole.

5.3 Students reading for an archaeology degree should be taught within an environment conducive to learning, which is intellectually stimulating, and which embraces intellectual diversity. There should be access to relevant published literature, IT facilities, appropriate primary sources, archaeological materials (such as artefacts, archives, hand-specimens, and comparative collections), field equipment and instrumentation (such as topographic survey systems and geophysical survey facilities) and, for science-based work, properly equipped and staffed laboratories (including layout space, sample preparation facilities and access to analytical apparatus). Given the importance for archaeology graduates of the development of technical skills in a variety of areas of archaeological practice, institutions should facilitate access to the equipment and technical resources for the pursuit of these within the archaeology programmes they manage.

5.4 Archaeology students should be provided with full documentation for their programme of study and on each component within it, including clear learning objectives. Among the documentation provided by departments there should be information regarding contextual aspects of the programme, together with health and safety instructions for fieldwork and laboratory analysis, and guidance on ethical issues associated with archaeological practice.

5.5 An education in archaeology involves active engagement with both the archaeological community and the wider community. Students should participate in archaeological projects within and/or outside the institution in which they are studying, and be made aware of relevant learned societies and statutory and professional bodies. Fieldwork constitutes an essential aspect of the engagement with professional practice.

Teaching and learning methods

5.6 The balance of teaching and learning methods will vary between programmes according to departmental missions, aims and interests. However, it will be characteristic of archaeology programmes in all institutions that teaching will be research-led, and that there will be a wide and diverse range of learning and teaching styles as befits the intellectual focus of a discipline, whose core interest is the evolution and variety of human society. Much of the best teaching and learning in archaeology will be an interactive process from which students and academics gain mutual benefit because of the research-led environment for teaching. Students need to be encouraged to learn through experience, both as individuals and as members of defined teams, with practicals and fieldwork playing important roles in such provision. Directed reading represents a cornerstone for the establishment of the knowledge base.

5.7 The principal learning and teaching methods that an archaeology student may experience will depend on the aims and objectives of the programme, but are likely to comprise an appropriate combination of the following:

- directed reading within the specialist literature (including books and periodicals)
- field-visits to appropriate monuments, structures and collections for direct experience of material covered by the course
- field investigation projects including excavations and surveys

- 'hands-on' practical exercises and science-based experiments, laboratory-based demonstrations, artefact handling and identification work
- lectures that inform by capturing interest and exciting curiosity
- placement or workplace experience with an archaeological organisation or museum
- practical exercises and demonstrations (indoor and outdoor) in excavation and survey methodologies
- seminars that provide the context for group work and small-group discussions
- team-based exercises
- tutorials and supervisions for structured regular contact with tutors and supervisors
- a range of self-guided student-centred learning resources, from paper-based materials to IT-based tutorial modules, chat rooms, message boards, websites and so on.

5.8 Within most honours archaeology degree programmes there will be a requirement that students should undertake some form of independent research work, often in the form of project work and/or a dissertation presented in the later stages of the programme. Where field-based research is carried out, this represents an area of the student's learning in which mature and intelligent reflection will also be needed on the potential risks and moral and ethical issues associated with a proposed project.

Assessment

5.9 There should be an explicit assessment strategy as part of the curriculum design for all archaeology courses. It is important that the adopted strategy clearly and explicitly reflects the learning outcomes of the course components, supports student learning and enables students to demonstrate progressive levels of attainment. The strategy should reflect the variety of abilities and skills developed within the curriculum, and be tied to the methods of teaching and learning adopted by the course.

5.10 The assessment of archaeology courses should include a mix of assessment methods that are, overall, accessible to students from varying educational and cultural backgrounds within different learning situations. It is essential that the procedures used for assessment cover the subject knowledge (breadth and depth), abilities and skills developed through the degree programme. The assessment of work undertaken in practical classes is most likely to be through exercise or project submissions. Seminar contributions may be assessed either directly or indirectly. Coursework may be part of the overall assessment of a student, or regarded as a pedagogic device for developing research and presentation skills, with formative assessment and regular feedback being provided by the tutor. Feedback and assessment may also be provided by the peer group.

5.11 Students of archaeology are likely to encounter a range of assessment methods during their course reflecting the range of learning objectives. The following list provides a general indicator of the range of current practice and is not meant to be a specific checklist against which to measure individual programmes:

- an extended personal research project carried out over a prolonged period and involving primary data collection or extensive synthesis of secondary data, to assess powers of data assembly and analysis (including quantitative and qualitative analysis as appropriate), presentation, knowledge deployment, argument and reasoning
- essays and assignments prepared to a defined timetable to assess knowledge and understanding of a topic, communication, analytical and presentation skills
- examination through unseen and seen papers under timed condition requiring written essays and/or multiple choice questions to assess knowledge-base, understanding and analytical skills
- fieldwork and/or laboratory notebooks and reports to assess observational procedures, practical skills and methodologies
- oral presentations to assess presentation and communication skills and group work
- observed participation of practical team-based exercises in the field, laboratory and/or classroom, to assess skills in collaboration and group problem solving
- practical exams that test key skills (eg microscopy, osteological identifications etc) in a laboratory but under examination conditions (eg unseen, timed and marked)
- online examinations and electronic work books
- annotated bibliographies
- portfolios of work relating to practical exercises
- reports on external placements
- unseen tests
- graphical presentations in a variety of media formats.

6 Benchmark standards

6.1 This subject benchmark statement sets out both the minimum achievement and that which an average student will have demonstrated before they are awarded an honours degree in archaeology. It applies only to those students who acquire at least 50 per cent of the credits for their degree programme in archaeology (see above for comments on programmes with lesser contributions).

6.2 A student at the very bottom of the honours class will have satisfactorily demonstrated achievement in most of the areas of performance listed below under threshold standard on a sufficient number of occasions or over a sufficient range of activities to give confidence that they have the range of knowledge, understanding and skills expected in graduates in archaeology. The vast majority of students will perform significantly better than the minimum standard, at the typical standard listed below . Each institution will have its own method of determining what appropriate evidence of this achievement is, but the external examiner system is currently the main quality assurance mechanism for ensuring comparability of standards between institutions.

Subject knowledge, understanding and skills

Typical standard

6.3 On graduating with an honours degree in archaeology, students should be able to:

- demonstrate broad and comparative knowledge of the archaeology of a number of geographical regions
- demonstrate broad and comparative knowledge of the archaeology of a number of chronological periods
- demonstrate a good understanding of the principles and methods by which archaeological data are acquired and analysed
- demonstrate a range of practical experience of the recovery of primary archaeological data and associated post-excavation methods
- evaluate the variety of approaches to understanding, constructing, and interpreting the past
- demonstrate comprehension of the problematic and varied nature of archaeological evidence in the field and/or in artefact-based, collections-based, or records-based studies
- demonstrate an understanding of the development of archaeology as a discipline
- recognise and understand the finite nature of the archaeological resource and the need for its conservation
- gather and appropriately deploy archaeological evidence from primary and secondary sources
- analyse and reflect critically upon a range of archaeological data
- design, research and present a sustained piece of archaeological writing
- demonstrate knowledge and competence in archaeological field and laboratory skills, particularly in relation to the recording, description and analysis of primary data
- apply an understanding of the social, cultural and political context of archaeological interpretation and practice
- demonstrate a critical awareness of the legal and ethical dimensions of archaeology
- apply an understanding of theoretical concepts to other areas of archaeology
- show an awareness of the issues involved in planning, designing, and executing a programme of field, laboratory or museum-based study.

Threshold standard

6.4 On graduating with an honours degree in archaeology, students should be able to:

- demonstrate knowledge of the archaeology of a number of geographical regions
- demonstrate knowledge of the archaeology of a number of chronological periods
- demonstrate understanding of the principles and methods by which archaeological data are acquired and analysed

- demonstrate practical experience of the recovery of primary archaeological data
- describe the variety of approaches to understanding, constructing, and interpreting the past
- describe the problematic and varied nature of archaeological evidence
- recognise the finite nature of the archaeological resource and the need for its conservation
- describe the development of archaeology as a discipline
- gather and present archaeological evidence from primary and secondary sources
- recognise the range of archaeological data
- research and present an extended piece of archaeological writing
- demonstrate knowledge of archaeological field and laboratory skills, particularly in relation to the recording and description of primary data
- demonstrate awareness of the social, cultural and political context of archaeological interpretation and practice
- demonstrate awareness of the legal and ethical dimensions of archaeology.

Generic skills

Typical standard

6.5 On graduating with an honours degree in archaeology, students should be able to:

- apply an understanding of relevant archaeological concepts and methods in non-archaeological situations
- work as a participant or leader of a team, contributing effectively to decision-making and the achievement of objectives
- bring together and effectively integrate information and materials from a variety of different sources
- identify problems and evaluate answers or solutions
- undertake the analysis of factual information in a systematic and coherent way
- make a critical judgement of the relative strengths and weaknesses of particular arguments
- produce an accurate synthesis of the state of knowledge on a particular subject or topic
- act independently in planning and undertaking tasks
- reflect on his or her own progress, making use of feedback
- both orally and in writing, express her/himself with clarity and coherence
- present knowledge or a sustained argument in a way which is comprehensible to others, including those unfamiliar with the material
- use IT to select, present, and communicate information effectively and appropriately
- make oral presentations utilising visual aids effectively and appropriately

- demonstrate an ability to listen, comprehend and reflect when presented with new ideas or information
- demonstrate visual skills in recognising and describing material remains, and recognising anomalies
- apply classification and analytical skills in collating and categorising data
- demonstrate spatial awareness (both two and three-dimensional) in terms of reading plans and landscapes
- manage her/his time efficiently and effectively in relation to both practical and intellectual skills
- apply ideas to new situations
- understand the importance of healthy and safety in the work environment
- critically understand contemporary debates relating to sustainability, employability, and global perspectives.

Threshold standard

6.6 On graduating with an honours degree in archaeology, students should be able to:

- demonstrate awareness of relevant archaeological concepts and methods in non-archaeological situations
- perform assigned tasks as part of a team, participating in discussion
- bring together information and materials from different sources
- identify problems and questions
- undertake the analysis of factual information
- recognise weaknesses in the arguments of others
- produce a synthesis of the state of knowledge on a particular subject or topic
- with guidance, undertake tasks independently
- reflect on his or her own progress
- express her/himself both orally and in writing
- present knowledge or an argument in a way which is comprehensible to others
- use IT to select and present information
- make oral presentations utilising visual aids
- demonstrate an ability to listen and comprehend when presented with new ideas or information
- demonstrate visual skills in recognising and describing material remains
- demonstrate classification skills in describing, categorising and collating data
- understand the importance of healthy and safety in the work environment
- understand contemporary debates relating to sustainability, employability and global perspectives.

Appendix A - Foreword to the original subject benchmark statement for archaeology

This document has been prepared by a panel drawn from the Standing Committee of University Professors and Heads of Departments of Archaeology (SCUPHA) membership acting on behalf of the subject community. The timescale imposed on us for the exercise by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) has been very short, and we are particularly conscious of the very short time that was available for the first critical stage of feedback from colleagues. We are extremely grateful to the many departments and individuals who managed to find the time, in the midst of many other pressures, to send us comments on the first draft circulated in late December 1999. We have considered all these comments very carefully. We have amended the wording of the draft whenever (as often) better or more appropriate wording was suggested, and at a more general level we have added, deleted or amended text when we could see consistency in recommendations (sometimes recommendations were diametrically opposed, though!).

With membership drawn from almost a third of the 28 archaeology departments, in theory the Archaeology panel ought to be more representative of current higher education (HE) provision in our subject than the panels of the subjects taught at most of the c.100 HE providers. We were also mindful throughout the compilation of the document of the variety of programmes, not just within the 28 departments of archaeology but at the other institutions on the SCUPHA list. We hope we have got the balance right in both the content and phrasing of the document, so that it encourages and supports different kinds of programmes (whether different in the weight of the Archaeology component in the overall programme, and/or the learning objectives, and/or the institutional context), as well as defining the kind of aspects we (the discipline, not the panel!) think should be core. Most of the feedback (which came from both large and small departments of the 28 and from other departments not teaching single honours archaeology) suggested that we have got it about right.

One piece of informal feedback would be particularly valuable, regarding the 'threshold' and 'typical' standards, in many ways the hardest part of the subject benchmark] statement to write.

Appendix B - Membership of the review group for the subject benchmark statement for archaeology

Professor T Darvill (Chair)	Bournemouth University
Dr R Doonan	University of Sheffield
Dr M Pearce	University of Nottingham
Dr G Philip	University of Durham
Professor I Ralston	University of Edinburgh
Dr A Sinclair	University of Liverpool and The Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for History, Classics and Archaeology

Appendix C - Membership of the original benchmarking group for archaeology

Details provided below are as published in the original subject benchmark statement for Archaeology (2000)

Professor G Barker (Chair)	University of Leicester
Professor J Collis	University of Sheffield
Professor T Darvill	Bournemouth University
Professor C Gamble	University of Southampton
Dr W S Hanson	University of Glasgow
Dr C Hills	University of Cambridge
Professor J Hunter	University of Birmingham
Professor M H Johnson	University of Durham
Professor E A Slater	University of Liverpool
Ms K Baker (Secretary)	University of Leicester

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