

What is the impact of the Higher Education Field Academy?

The Higher Education Field Academy has been running since 2005 and feedback has shown it to have been consistently successful in providing thousands of school pupils with a stimulating and challenging range of activities which provides a positive experience of higher education and transforms their attitudes towards their abilities, their education and their future.

After completing HEFA, 70–80% of participants report feeling more positive about staying in education after year 11, studying for 'A' levels and applying to university.

Numbers intending to apply to university are raised by up to 60% after HEFA participation, while in the highest ability groups numbers interested in applying to Oxbridge more than doubles.

Tracking shows that the impact of HEFA is an enduring one: two years after participating in HEFA, students and staff alike remember it as a positive and valuable experience, with 88% of tracked students, most from non-HE backgrounds, interested in applying to university.



Students find the Higher Education Field Academy inspiring in many ways.

"I really enjoyed the experience, recording what we found and knowing that it may become of some use to someone, somewhere. Cambridge University was very welcoming and such a lovely place. I wasn't sure if I wanted to go onto higher education before this but now I definitely want to. Thank you!" (MJ, (student) Terrington St Clement)

"I never thought I would have enjoyed anything like that but I did... I hope that I will get another chance like this" (DP, (student) Thorrington)

"We had a lot of responsibility to do the right job, but at the same time a lot of fun... I've had a truly amazing experience." (CB, (student), Little Hallingbury)

"So what skills did I learn and use during HEFA? Teamwork... communication and cooperation... practical skills... ingenuity and common sense...self motivation" (EA, (student) West Mersea)

"A life-changing experience. Before the HEFA I questioned my ability, after it I thought 'if I can do this I can do anything!'" (LS, Wiveton, 2 years after completing HEFA, starting A levels and aiming for university)

School staff who have accompanied student groups on Field Academies rate the experience highly.

"The Cambridge University HEFA was a brilliant experience for the pupils, they learnt so much and we all enjoyed the three days immensely. Conversations with pupils afterwards reflected the significant impact that the excavations and the visit to Cambridge had on their attitudes and perceptions of HE. Their horizons have been widened and university study is now much more real to them." (JW (teacher), Little Hallingbury)

"As a teacher from a close to 'special measures' school, this exercise has massively impacted on student expectations of themselves, their closest university, and their capacity and inclination to aim higher in the future. For them — thank you." (DJ (teacher), Houghton)

"Excellent opportunity. Good organization and with clear focus provided. Pupils' experience of team work, leadership opportunity and research talk definitely helped develop their potential" (GF (teacher), Thorrington)



Interested in finding out more about the Higher Education Field Academy?

If you'd like to know more about the Higher Education Field Academy, or would like to get students at your school involved, visit the HEFA website (www.arch.cam.ac.uk/fieldacademies.html) or e-mail the project team on access@arch.cam.ac.uk, or write to HEFA, McDonald Institute, Downing St, Cambridge, CB2 3ER.

Higher Education Field Academy

Digging for the past, Building for the future



"Our students' aspirations were genuinely lifted"

What is the Higher Education Field Academy?

The Higher Education Field Academy (HEFA) is devised and run by Dr Carenza Lewis (well known from Channel 4's *Time Team*), as part of the Widening Participation programme at the University of Cambridge. The Field Academy is designed to give school students the chance to develop the skills, confidence and enthusiasm to progress to the best possible university for them. HEFA does this by involving them in a substantial and challenging team-based university-linked project involving hands-on practical research, recording, writing and analysis.



Who is the Higher Education Field Academy targeted at?

The Higher Education Field Academy is aimed at bright young people of secondary school age who would benefit from encouragement to raise their educational aspirations, especially regarding going to university. This can include those who may need encouragement to apply to university at all, and also those who are already considering applying to university but who need encouragement to consider a wider range of choices (including those who are very able but may need encouragement to challenge for places at top universities). As part of the University of Cambridge Widening Participation programme, priority is given to those individuals who are from groups which are



currently under-represented in these Higher Education Institutions.



What do students do on the Higher Education Field Academy?

- Field Academy participants spend two days working in teams of 3–4 excavating small archaeological test pits in gardens and other open spaces within villages and hamlets, as guests of local residents.
- Field Academy participants dig the test pits themselves with support from school and university staff, independently completing all elements of their excavation by carefully following directions in the Field Academy handbook over two days. Instruction and guidance including on-site finds identification and dating is provided by Field Academy experts.
- After completing the two-day excavation, participants write up their results using the records they have kept.
- The third day of the Field Academy brings participants into the University to analyse their discoveries and includes a tour with lunch in one of the colleges.
- Written and practical assignments are assessed by the University, and reports returned to participants via their school.
- Participants are awarded certificates to mark their achievement in completing the Field Academy.



What do students achieve on the Higher Education Field Academy?

HEFA constitutes a varied and challenging scheme of work which must be completed to the highest possible standards — the excavation results are used in academic research. In carrying out the wide range of required tasks, students will develop and refine a range of 'soft' skills vital for success in education and the workplace, and will also become more informed and confident about the world of university.



1. Students will learn how to respond successfully to the challenge of independently managing a practical, technical investigation of a type completely new to them.
2. They'll learn people skills and effective team working, excavating in mixed-school groups and meeting people from very different backgrounds to themselves.
3. They'll gain experience in thinking creatively to find solutions to unfamiliar problems as they excavate sites that have never been dug before.
4. They'll develop their ability to work with persistence and patience and accuracy as they sift through layers of soil.
5. They'll learn how to assimilate new information and use this to develop new ideas as they find out what their finds are and think about what they mean.
6. They'll improve their ability to communicate, present and analyse information verbally, digitally and in writing as they record and evaluate their results.
7. They'll refine their ability to plan, structure and edit their written work by compiling a report on their excavation.
8. They'll learn more about the choices open to them and develop a sense of ease and connection with the world of higher education while working with, and in, the University of Cambridge.
9. Succeeding at something so complex and new to them and knowing they have made a unique and valuable contribution to a major national programme of academic research will raise their confidence in their abilities.
10. Knowing that they have developed new skills, succeeded at a tough challenge, and enjoyed the time they spent in university will raise Field Academy students' ambitions for their future, in Higher Education and beyond.