Suggestions for successful graduate applications to Archaeology

We strongly encourage you to answer all the questions on the GRADSAF and to use the full character count allowed for each question. Acceptance to our courses is competitive, and giving us the maximum information gives you the best chance.

Research Experience:
This is the most important question. Examples of research experience might be your BA or Master's thesis, a long research paper submitted as coursework, work on an excavation or in a lab as part of a team, or development of a database within an internship. This research does not have to be archaeological in nature. Be as descriptive and detailed as possible—what were the research questions, methods and outcomes? What was your role?

Reason for Applying
This section should describe your research project or interests (e.g., theoretical approach, regional culture, archaeological science application, heritage issues) and why you think these interests will be best supported in Cambridge (for instance, by a particular supervisor, by Division or McDonald Institute facilities, or by participation in seminar groups). Please do not quote sections of our website back to us, but do read through it and find where you would fit.

Career Goals
An ambitious Plan A is great (e.g., university professorship, head of UNESCO). You might also reflect on a more accessible Plan B. This question does not need to identify a particular target employment position—instead you might describe the kind of impact you would like to have: e.g., engaging with refugee communities about heritage, writing the Best Book Ever on Mayan headrests. For MPhil applicants, would your degree with us be a step on a trajectory to a PhD in the same subject or might it provide a turning point to a different career—such as a move to heritage law or conservation?

Additional Information to Support Application
This question is not mandatory. But it is an opportunity to tell us about how you became interested in archaeology, or a little about your background or challenges you have overcome.

Academic Awards
These should be university/college and external, but not high school/secondary school. Include both financial awards/prizes and non-financial awards that are markers of esteem (e.g., Dean's List, medal for best performance in a subject).

Other applications made
We understand that you must apply widely to maximise your chances of funding. But we strongly discourage you from applying to more than one faculty or department at Cambridge (e.g., to Archaeology and also to History and/or Classics). Your interests should be strong enough and the fit good enough that one course and faculty/department at Cambridge is best.
Supporting Documents
It should go without saying, but please scan any transcripts or certificates clearly and with the top of the page at the top of your scan.Blurry documents uploaded sideways will not help your case for admission.

Referees
It is important that your referees know you and can address your recent or current work and research abilities as well as your future potential. Good options are your thesis supervisor, or a lecturer from whom you have taken several courses/classes and to whom you have submitted several pieces of written work.

If you are a Cambridge MPhil student applying to continue to a PhD, in some cases, it may be appropriate to ask your current Cambridge supervisor or a lecturer for a reference. But be aware that if you are applying in the first term, in order to make deadlines for funding, that your local supervisor is unlikely to know you well enough to provide a strong and well-informed reference. You should seek an additional reference from someone at your prior institution.

The Gates application asks for a third 'personal' reference. Ideally, this should be a different person than your two academic referees. If you wish to use one referee for two letters, please let them know that they should address different aspects of your career in each letter—one regarding your academic abilities, the second (personal reference) addressing your leadership qualities.

Application Process
Applications are considered on a rolling basis throughout the period that the admissions window is open but quotas are in place so you are encouraged to submit your application as early as possible. Always take note of any funding deadlines that affect you when making your application.

Your application will be reviewed by a small panel of staff members, including your probable supervisor. The time taken for your application to be fully reviewed and a decision made can vary depending on the time of year and the panel involved but we aim to move things along as quickly as we can. It is possible that the panel may request further information to support your application or ask that you attend an interview either in person or via Skype. In this situation, you will be contacted with the relevant details by the Graduate Administrator.

Once a decision has been made your self-service account will be updated. If an offer has been made to you, the details and any conditions will follow in a letter from the Graduate Admissions department. Do make sure that you read any documentation they send you thoroughly and address any associated questions directly to them.