The Archaeology Tripos: Frequently Asked Questions

General information

- **What subject areas does it cover?** The Archaeology Tripos includes Archaeology, Biological Anthropology, and the two Ancient Near Eastern subjects, Assyriology and Egyptology.

- **How does the Archaeology Tripos relate to HSPS?** The Archaeology Tripos is a separate Tripos from HSPS; students wishing to study Archaeology, Biological Anthropology, Assyriology or Egyptology should apply to the Archaeology Tripos. Archaeology students in all three years will be allowed to borrow some HSPS papers, and HSPS students in all three years will be allowed to borrow some Archaeology papers.

- **What colleges will offer it?** All undergraduate colleges will offer the Archaeology Tripos.

- **What subjects will potential students need to have?** The Archaeology Tripos covers a broad range of topics, almost none of which are commonly taught at sixth form. Potential students can apply with almost any combination of subjects in the arts, sciences and social sciences; there are no specific requirements.

- **What is the standard admissions offer?** Typical offers are: A*AA at A-level, 40-42 IB points with 776 at Higher Level, or AAA at Scottish Advanced Highers.

- **What admissions tests will students have to take?** Students applying to the Archaeology Tripos will have to sit a one-hour written test on the day of their interview; this will involve reading a short passage and answering questions on it. The passage and questions will be chosen to allow students interested in all the subjects covered by the tripos to do well.

- **How should applicants prepare for the test?** There is no specific preparation for the test; it is simply aimed at giving us an idea of students’ ability to read and understand a text and to write analytically - skills they will already be learning in school.

- **What is the structure of the course?** The course is designed so that students progress from a general introduction to specialised subjects and independent research. There are four individual tracks and two joint tracks which are: Archaeology, Biological Anthropology, Egyptology, Assyriology, Archaeology & Biological Anthropology, Egyptology & Assyriology.

- **What borrowed papers can students take?** A range of papers can be borrowed from Social Anthropology, Politics, Sociology, Psychology & Behavioural Sciences and Classics.

- **How is the course assessed?** Like most Cambridge courses, examinations are important, but most modules also involve assessed work of varying forms such as essays, lab reports, etc.

- **How do I choose a college?** All colleges offer all aspects of the Archaeology Tripos, whether or not they have fellows who are members of Archaeology. Aside from general criteria such as whether you like the feel of a college, its location and activities, you should also feel free to approach colleges where fellows work in areas you are interested in; Archaeology
Directors of Studies and college fellows will be happy to respond to your enquiries. A list of these Directors of Studies and their college affiliations can be found on our website.

- **What careers can I do with a degree in Archaeology (or Biological Anthropology, Assyriology or Egyptology)?** Our graduates are more or less evenly divided among those going on to further study (in archaeology or other subjects, at Cambridge or elsewhere) and those going on to work at jobs requiring general academic skills. They have gone on to an extremely wide range of jobs in business, non-profit organisations, media, the government, the heritage sector, law and, of course, archaeology; as the degree integrates a wide range of skills from the humanities to hard science, particularly writing and data analysis, it provides excellent general training.

- **What should I read before I come to Cambridge?** A general reading list is available from the Department website here: [https://www.arch.cam.ac.uk/prospective-students/undergraduates/prospective-undergraduate-reading-list](https://www.arch.cam.ac.uk/prospective-students/undergraduates/prospective-undergraduate-reading-list)

- **What fieldwork is involved?** Students following the Archaeology-related tracks participate in an intensive training dig in or around Cambridge at the start of Easter Term of their first year. They then do four weeks’ excavation on a research project of their choice between their second and third years. There is also a week-long staff-led fieldtrip to an archaeological destination somewhere in Europe in Easter break of their second year. Biological Anthropology students have no fieldwork requirements; for Assyriology, Egyptology and joint tracks, it varies, but all students on any single or joint track of the undergraduate course are welcome to do fieldwork if they wish.

- **Does it involve any extra costs for students?** Generally not; most or all fieldwork costs are covered by a combination of departmental funding and college vacation study grants. Occasionally, if students wish to do their four-week individually arranged fieldwork somewhere particularly expensive to get to (generally outside Europe) they may need to help fund it themselves.

- **Where can I find out more?** For more information, go to the Cambridge online prospectus ([http://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/courses/archaeology](http://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/courses/archaeology)), and to the Department of Archaeology’s webpage ([http://www.arch.cam.ac.uk/prospective-students](http://www.arch.cam.ac.uk/prospective-students)). Or, find us on social media.

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