

GO BEYOND BOUNDARIES



UAUK & ClfA Accredited Degree

# Archaeology

UNDERGRADUATE GUIDE

## **Charlotte Doig** MA Archaeology

I have always loved history and been fascinated by the ways in which people lived their lives in the distant past. Archaeology presents an opportunity to fulfil this passion in a practical way. Choosing Archaeology at Aberdeen has been one of the best decisions I've ever made – alongside research skills, I have gained many skills in excavation, technology and leadership. I really feel like Aberdeen has given me an edge over others in the job market.



→ **3RD IN THE UK**  
**FOR ARCHAEOLOGY**  
**AND ANTHROPOLOGY**

Guardian University Guide 2025



# About Aberdeen

## **Going beyond boundaries, expectation, and tradition since 1495**

For more than 525 years we have proudly offered our students life-changing opportunities by proving true to our Foundational Purpose: 'open to all and dedicated to the pursuit of truth in the service of others'.

Our rich heritage, world-leading research, and learning excellence has contributed to our association with five Nobel Prize winners and our ranking in the Top 15 UK Universities (Guardian University Guide 2025 and The Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2025).

## **Scotland's alternative city**

Aberdeen is welcoming, adventurous, unafraid, and forever evolving – the perfect place to find your purpose and your people. Nestled in between the Cairngorms National Park and miles of golden coastline, Aberdeen has something exciting at every turn.

## **An ancient campus that has helped shape the modern world**

Since 1495 our campus, and the world around it, have seen many changes. But the medieval core of the University, King's College, has remained constant. Over the centuries we've continued to add and innovate, growing our campus to the ideal blend of old and new you'll find today.

To keep breaking boundaries in education and research, we need to keep innovating. We are committed to investing in our campus to provide the very best learning resources for our students.

Our iconic Sir Duncan Rice Library is so much more than a study space. With social and collaborative spaces, a public lending library and museum, the Library embodies our foundational promise to be open to all in the service of others.

## **A community committed to inclusion and progress**

At Aberdeen, you'll make friends and connections that will last a lifetime. Aberdeen has been voted one of the safest and most affordable cities (Complete University Guide 2022) and the University of Aberdeen voted 2nd for value for money (StudentCrowd University Awards 2023). When you come to Aberdeen you'll be well looked after, and part of a close-knit community known for its outstanding support.



# Welcome

From the origins of our species to the events of yesterday, Archaeology is the only discipline that offers you the human past in its entirety. It is a subject that actively shapes our understanding of our human past through discovery and insights made in the field, the lab, or the library.

Archaeology at Aberdeen has a distinctive northern flavour, focusing on Scotland, Northern Europe, Scandinavia, Northeast Asia, the North Atlantic and high latitude regions of North America.

Closer to home, our staff and students take full advantage of our setting amongst some of the richest archaeological remains in the UK, with excursions to ancient monuments and museums throughout Scotland.

In seeking to understand how ancient people lived their lives, structured their world, and engaged with their environment, archaeologists ask the big questions that can provide us with the tools to tackle global challenges in the present.

Our courses cover subjects such as Scottish archaeology, the origins of modern humans, colonisation of the North, history and theory of archaeology, osteoarchaeology, bioarchaeology and excavation and research skills.

In the Honours years, there is an emphasis on field and research skills, with a required fieldwork component. A dissertation provides students with the opportunity to tackle an original piece of research.

Students are strongly encouraged to undertake appropriate field or placement work, excavation-based or otherwise, to gain practical skills and staff currently involved in research are happy to advise and help with such opportunities.

*For over a decade, the Department of Archaeology and our Yup'ik collaborators have been excavating the remains of Nunalleq, an ancient Alaskan village endangered by coastal erosion.*





**Thomas Warrington**  
MA Archaeology

One of the main reasons I selected the programme here at University of Aberdeen was the departmental focus. I felt it was something different from the more traditional classical archaeology presented at other universities. I've enjoyed everything, but if I had to pick one standout moment it would definitely be the fieldwork opportunity in summer going into third year. This gives you a great taste of what field archaeology is like and is where you really immerse yourself in archaeology. Aberdeen's programme allows you get as involved as you like; there are numerous opportunities to volunteer in the field and in the lab.



# Degree Programmes

At Aberdeen, you can choose between studying archaeology either as a Bachelor of Science (BSc) or Master of Arts (MA) degree programme.

The main difference between the BSc and MA programmes is in the subsidiary subjects taken alongside archaeology. For the BSc, these will be mainly science subjects, while MA students generally take subsidiary courses in the humanities and social sciences.

Both programmes are professionally accredited by CIfA (the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists) and you will have an opportunity to register as a Student Member and continue as an Affiliate Member when you graduate.

## Single Honours Programmes

- BSc Archaeology
- MA Archaeology

## Joint Honours Options with Archaeology

- MA Anthropology and Archaeology
- MA Archaeology and Art History
- MA Archaeology and Celtic & Anglo-Saxon Studies
- MA Archaeology and Gaelic Studies
- MA Archaeology and History
- MA Archaeology and Language & Linguistics

*The Crow Stane, a Pictish symbol stone near Rhynie in Aberdeenshire, marks the site of an excavation where Aberdeen students and staff have helped to write new chapters in our understanding of the Picts.*



# Degree Structure

In your first year, you will take two archaeology courses for an introduction to the study of archaeology and archaeological methods:

- Archaeology in Action
- Caves to Kingdoms: An Introduction to Prehistoric Archaeology

In your second year, you will delve deeper into archaeology with the following four courses:

- Prehistoric Britain: from Boxgrove to Bede
- Test Tubes and Trowels: An Introduction to Archaeological Science
- Past Lives
- The Archaeology of The North: Lifeways & Cultural Change

In year 3, students undertake specific training in field methods and post-excavation analysis with the following courses:

- Archaeological Fieldwork Portfolio
- Professional Archaeology I: Field Methods
- Archaeological Research Project Part 1
- Professional Archaeology II: Post-Excavation Analysis and Employment

In year 4, students are required to write a dissertation, which is an original piece of supervised research of approximately 12,000 words, on an archaeological topic of your choosing. In addition, students also take our capstone course - Current Issues in Archaeology - which explores current topics from domestication and climate change to community archaeology and death.

Alongside your archaeology courses, you will also select courses from other subject areas across the University.

You can view the structure and content for each degree programme at [www.abdn.ac.uk/study](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/study)

## Research-led Teaching

Active research is an important part of your degree training. Our medieval campus setting, combined with our location at the heart of the wonderful archaeological landscape of the northeast of Scotland means that our students enjoy easy access to an unrivalled number of archaeological sites and museums collections, including our extensive collections of human and animal bones with our laboratories. Students have also previously participated in fieldwork throughout Scotland, as well as in Alaska and Mongolia.

You will also be able to attend lectures and seminars given by scholars visiting the University, and lectures organised by the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland in Aberdeen.

# Accredited Degrees



The Department of Archaeology at the University of Aberdeen is the first archaeology department in Scotland to have its degree programmes accredited by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIFA) and University Archaeology UK (UAUK).

Accreditation is awarded to those degree programmes that are deemed to provide the relevant professional skills needed for a career in the historic environment. Choosing an accredited degree, therefore, gives you the best possible springboard to develop a career in commercial archaeology.



→ **1ST IN SCOTLAND  
FOR OVERALL STUDENT  
SATISFACTION IN FORENSIC AND  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SCIENCES**

National Student Survey 2024



# Careers

The archaeology curriculum is designed to equip graduates with a range of professional skills that will prepare them for a career in archaeology and many other professions. Professional contract-based archaeology is now a multi-million pound business in the UK. Employment can also be gained in the museum and heritage sector; in education and historic environment agencies; in natural heritage agencies; as well as in research, planning, and the media.

The degree programme also encourages the development of critical thinking, research design, field methods, data analysis and communication methods - important transferable skills that make archaeology graduates highly employable in a variety of other fields.

An honours degree may also lead to a higher postgraduate degree, such as a PhD. Moreover, a degree in archaeology will not only help your employment prospects, but it will also open up new and exciting horizons on the world around you.

# Why Choose Aberdeen?

- Our staff are leading scientists, researchers and fieldworkers in Northern Europe, Scandinavia, Northeast Asia, the North Atlantic and high latitude regions of North America.
- Our degree programmes are accredited by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) and University Archaeology UK (UAUK).
- We are ranked 3rd in the UK for Archaeology by the Guardian University Guide 2025
- We are in the Global Top 100 for Archaeology according to the QS World Rankings by Subject 2024.
- We are actively engaged in field projects in the north, including in Scotland itself, answering questions about the human past from the earliest colonisation of the north to later expansions.
- Fieldwork is an important part of the degree, with field trips to see local monuments available at Level 1 and a range of field-school opportunities at Level 2.
- With the choice of a BSc or MA single honours degree, and a range of joint honours study options, our degree system gives you plenty of choice and flexibility to follow your own particular interests and enthusiasms.

*Study the archaeology of the north at Aberdeen and give your future exciting possibilities*



# → TOP 15 UK UNIVERSITY

Guardian University Guide 2025 and The Times  
and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2025



Listen to our Podcast!





## University of Aberdeen

The University of Aberdeen is the fifth oldest University in the UK, dating back to 1495. For more than 525 years, we have proudly offered our students life-changing opportunities by proving true to our Foundational Purpose: 'open to all and dedicated to the pursuit of truth in the service of others'.

Our vast experience in teaching – along with our modern, 21st century outlook – enables us to offer the same great opportunity to you today.

Our rich heritage, world-leading research and learning excellence has contributed to our association with five Nobel Prize winners and our ranking in the Top 15 UK Universities.\*

We now warmly invite you to join our Aberdeen family and become part of the next chapter in our history.

[www.abdn.ac.uk/study](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/study)

\*Guardian University Guide 2025 and The Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2025.





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**[abdn.ac.uk/archaeology](https://abdn.ac.uk/archaeology)**

**+44 (0)1224 272090**  
**[study@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:study@abdn.ac.uk)**

**f** UoAGeosciences  
**X** UoA\_Archaeology  
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**i** uniofaberdeen